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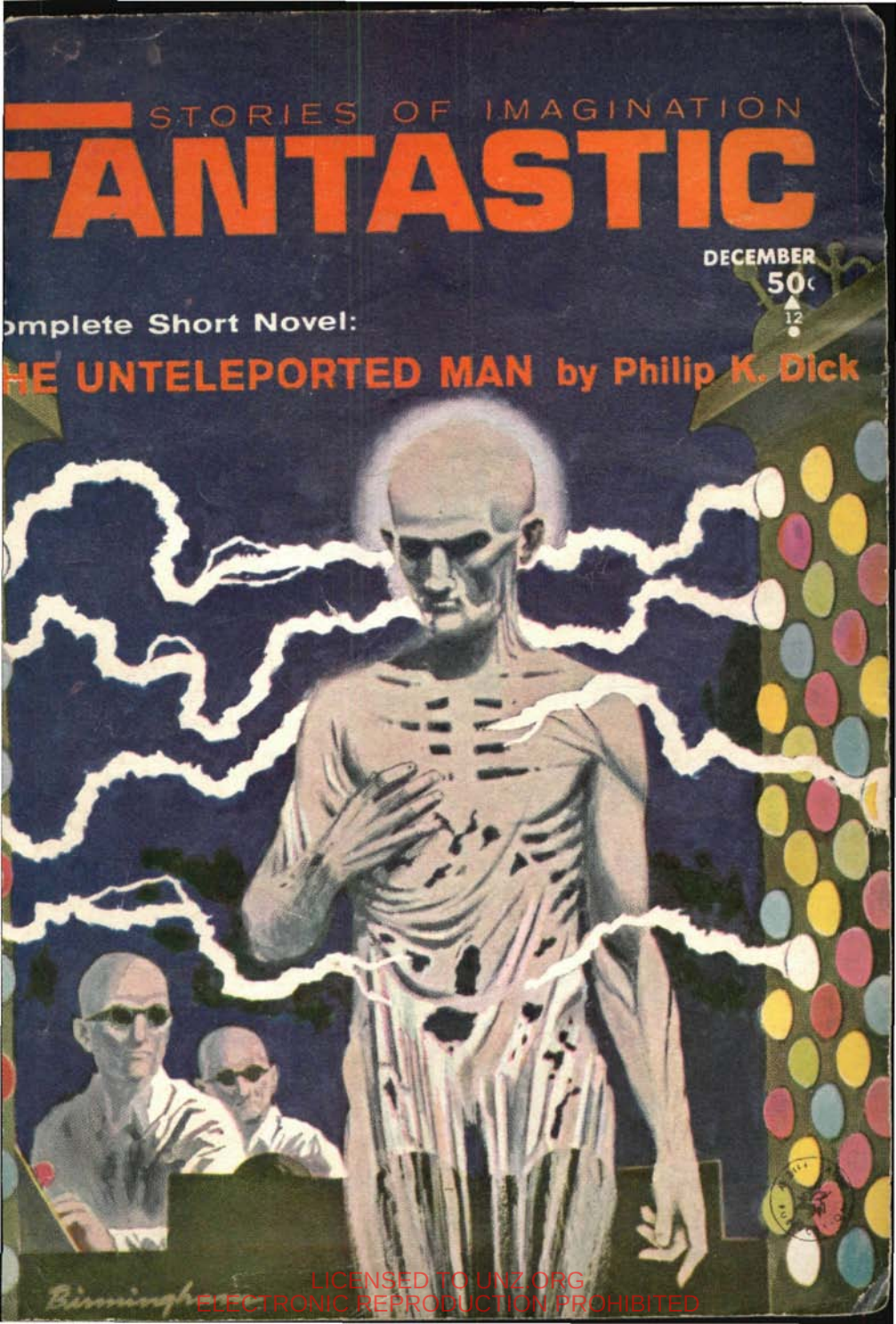

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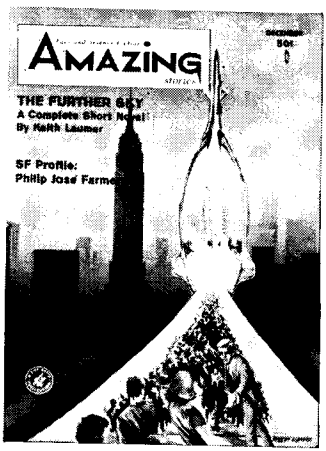

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STORIES OF IMAGINATION

FANTASTIC

DECEMBER 1964
Volume 13 Number 12

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ONE of the advertisements for the IBM exhibit at the New York World's Fair (now resting quietly, thank goodness, till next April), urged Fair visitors to attend IBM's computer display. After reeling off a number of miraculous things computers can do, the ad went on to say:

"Gradually, this surprising fact becomes clear. Computers are not so mysterious, after all. They help solve the most complex problems with simple principles of logic—the same kind that guide you in making decisions every day."

Well, one argument we could raise is that, heaven pity us, we have a great deal of trouble finding the right principles of logic needed to make our daily decisions. If computers can so simply solve complex principles, they *are* mysterious; because most people can't turn that trick often.

But another argument for the growing mysteriousness of computers was embedded in a recent news item which reported that computers are learning to talk to one another, and are developing minds and values of their own. The report, made by John Wilkinson, of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, warned that if linked data-processors ever become proficient at conversation, the consequences for just plain people could be unfortunate, indeed.

When the outputs of one computer become the inputs of another . . . and when this linkage is continued in series . . . "a new unitary machine is created with properties involving feedback and unpredictable secondary effects," Wilkinson said. If these are not carefully evaluated, they could mislead man into erroneous decisions—little things like nuclear war or cataclysmic economic upheavals. "The servant is displaying what very much looks like free will," said Wilkinson, who said that conversely man was losing *his* freedom of decision.

One suggested solution was the establishment of sanctuaries for human beings, much like the wildlife refuges for whooping cranes. Well, we wouldn't mind that so much. Just so long as they don't send inspectors down to watch us mate.—NL.

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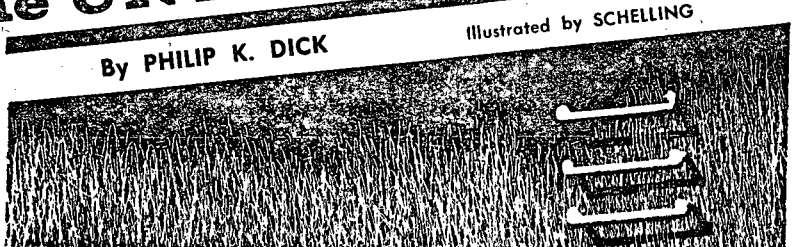
the UNTELEPORTED ma

By PHILIP K. DICK

Illustrated by SCHELLING



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It was quite possible, by Telpor, to reach the Fomalhaut System in 15 minutes. Why, then, did Rachmael ben Appelbaum insist on going by spaceship—a voyage of 18 years? Perhaps it had something to do with coming back.

OVER Rachmael ben Applebaum's head floated a creditor jet-balloon, and from within its articulation-circuit a flat but handsome, masculine—artificial, however—voice boomed, magnified so that not only Rachmael but everyone else crowding the ped-runnels heard it. The amplification was designed this way: you were singled out and simultaneously exposed; public ridicule, the jeers of the always-present crowds, was brought into play as a force working at you . . . and, Rachmael reflected, for the creditor, free.

"Mr. Applebaum!" The hearty, rich but machine-sponsored voice echoed, rolled and boomed, and a thousand human heads rotated in expectation, glanced up with amused interest, saw the creditor jet-balloon and spied also its target: Rachmael ben Applebaum trying to get from the parking lot where he had left his flapple and into the offices of Lies Incorporated, a distance of only two thousand yards—but enough to make him visible so as to become the creditor balloon's target.

"Okay," Rachmael grated, and strode on, not breaking gait; he made for the fluoron-illuminated entrance of the private police agency and did not look up; he pretended—as if this were possible—to ignore a sight which, in the last three years, he had learned to know fully.

"Mr. Applebaum," the balloon boomed. "As of this Wednesday, November 8, 2014, you owe, as inheritor of your late father's assets and debts, the sum of four million poscreds to Trails of Hoffman Limited, a major backer in your late father's—"

"Okay!" Rachmael said violently, halting, peering up in futile anguish . . . the desire to puncture, deflate and bring down the balloon was overwhelming—yet what could he do? By UN ordinance, a creditor could hire such harassment; this was legal.

And the grinning crowd knew it. Saw in this for them a brief but amusing ent-show: entertainment. However, he did not blame them; it was not their fault because they had over the

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years been trained this way. All the info and edu media, controlled by the "disinterested" UN public affairs bureaus, had tinkered with this facet of modern man's complex character: his ability to enjoy the suffering of someone else whom he did not even know.

"I cannot," Rachmael said, "pay. And you know it." Above, the jet-balloon heard; it had exceeding marvelous aud-receptors. But it did not believe him or care if what he said was true; its job was to hound him, not to seek the truth. Standing on the runnel as it automatically carried him along, Rachmael said, as reasonably as possible, "At present I have no funds, because continuously up to now, one by one, I've paid off as many of Applebaum Enterprise's creditors as I can."

Tauntingly, the mechanical voice from above boomed, "At three sigs on the poscred. Some settling of accounts."

Rachmael said, "Give me time."

"Plans, Mr. Applebaum?" The voice twisted with scorn.

After a pause he said, "Yes." But he did not specify; it depended in part on what he obtained from the private police agency, Lies Incorporated. If that was anything. But over the vidphone at least—he did think he had detected a certain sympathetic resonance from the master propietor of the police agency, Matson Glazer-Holliday.

NOW, in five minutes, in a formal screening-interview with a Lies Incorporated psych-rep, Rachmael would find out—learn just how far the private police agency, which after all had to survive the competition, had to stand up to the UN and the lesser titans of the nine planet system, would go in staking a man who was not merely broke but who owed—owed for the wreckage of an industrial empire which had collapsed, carrying its operator and owner, Maury Applebaum, to his—evidently—voluntary death.

Evidently. A good word, and a big one, like any word pertaining to death. As the runnel, despite the lurking, booming creditor balloon above, carried Rachmael toward the sanctuary of the shifting-color doorway he thought, maybe they can help me there, too.

Because it had just never quite seemed reasonable to him that his father, and god knew he was familiar with his father, would laser himself to death due to economic collapse . . . although admittedly, as subsequent events had proved, that collapse was terminal for Applebaum Enterprise.

"You must pay," the jet-balloon howled. "Trails of Hoffman insists; your petition of bankruptcy was turned down by the UN courts—you, Mr. Rachmael ben Applebaum, are legally liable for the sum of—"

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The voice abruptly vanished. As Rachmael crossed the threshold of the private inter-planetary police agency, and the thoroughly soundproof rexeroid door slid shut after him.

"Yes, sir," the robot receptionist, not jeering but friendly, said to him; what a contrast with the circus outside.

"Miss Holm," Rachmael said, and heard his voice shake. The creditor balloon had gotten to him; he was trembling and perspiring.

"Syn-cof?" the receptionist asked sympathetically. "Or Martian fnikjuice tea, while you wait?"

Rachmael, getting out a genuine Tampa, Florida Garcia y Vega cigarillo, murmured, "I'll just sit, thanks." He lit the cigar, waited. For Miss Freya Holm, whatever or whoever she was—and looked like.

* * *

A soft voice said, almost timidly, "Mr. ben Applebaum? I'm Miss Holm. If you'll come into my office—" She held the door open, and she was perfection; his Garcia y Vega cigarillo dwindled, neglected in the ash-tray as he rose to his feet. She, no more than twenty, chitin-black long hair that hung freely down her shoulders, teeth white as the glossy bond of the expensive UN info mags . . . he stared at her, at the small girl in the gold-spray bodice and shorts and sandals, with the single camellia over her left ear, stared and thought, *And this is my police protection.*

"Sure." Numbly, he passed her, entered her small, contemporarily-furnished office; in one glance he saw artifacts from the extinct cultures of six planets. "But Miss Holm," he said, then, candidly, "maybe your employers didn't explain; there's pressure here. I've got one of the most powerful economic syndromes in the Sol system after me. Trails of Hoffman—"

"THL," Miss Holm said, seating herself at her desk and touching the *on* of her aud-recorder, "is the owner of Dr. Sepp von Einem's teleportation construct and hence monopolistically has made obsolete the hyper-see liners and freighters of Applebaum Enterprise." On her desk before her she had a folio, which she consulted. "You see, Mr. Rachmael ben Applebaum—" She glanced up. "I wish to keep you in data-reference distinct from your father, the late Maury Applebaum. So may I call you Rachmael?"

"Y-yes," he said, nettled by her coolness, her small, firm poise—and the folio which lay before her; long before he had consulted Listening Instructional Educational Services—or, as the pop mind called it in UN-egged-on derision, Lies Incorpo-

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rated—the police agency had gathered, with its many data-monitors, the totality of information pertaining to him and to the collapse from abrupt technological obsolescence of the once formidable Applebaum Enterprise. And—

"Your late father," Freya Holm said, "died evidently at his own instigation. Officially the UN police list it as *Selbstmort* . . . suicide. We however—" She paused, consulted the folio. "Hmm."

Rachmael said, "I'm not satisfied, but I'm resigned." After all, he could not bring back his heavy, red-faced, near-sighted and highly over-taxed father, *Selbstmort*, in the official German of the UN, or not. "Miss Holm," he began, but she cut him off, gently.

"Rachmael, the Telpor electronic entity of Dr. Sepp von Einem, researched and paid for, developed in the several interplan labs of Trails of Hoffman, could do nothing else then bring chaos to the drayage industry; Theodoric Ferry, who is chairman of the board of THL, must have known this when he financed Dr. von Einem at his Schweinfort labs where the Telpor breakthrough occurred. And yet THL owned—outside of your father's—the largest single holding of the now-defunct Applebaum Enterprise. *Therefore Trails of Hoffman Limited deliberately ruined a corporation which it had major investments in* . . . and this has seemed strange to us. And—" she glanced up alertly, tossed back her mass of black hair. "Now they hound you for restitution; correct?"

Rachmael nodded mutely.

Quietly, Miss Holm asked, "How long did it take a passenger liner of your father's corporation to reach Whale's Mouth with a load of, say, five hundred colonists, plus their personal effects?"

After a tormented pause he said, "We—never even tired. Years. Even at hyper-see." The girl, across from him, still waited, wanted to hear him say it. "With our flagship transport," he said, "eighteen years."

"And with Dr. von Einem's teleportation instrument—"

"Fifteen minutes," he said harshly. And Whale's Mouth, the number IX planet of the Fomalhaut system, was to date the sole planet discovered either by manned or unmanned observers which was truly habitable—truly a second Terra. Eighteen years . . . and even deep-sleep would not help, for such a prolonged period; aging, although slowed down, although *consciousness* was dimmed, still occurred. Alpha and Prox; that had been all right; that had been short

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enough. But Fomalhaut, at twenty-four light years—

"We just couldn't compete," he said. "We simply could not carry colonists that far."

"Would you have tried, without von Einem's Telpor breakthrough?"

Rachmael said, "My father—"

"Was thinking about it." She nodded. "But then he died and it was too late and now you've had to sell virtually all your ships to meet note-payment due-dates. Now, from us, Rachmael. You wanted . . . ?"

"I still own," he said, "our fastest, newest, biggest ship, the *Omphalos;* she's never been sold, no matter how great the pressure THL has put on me, within and outside the UN courts." He hesitated, then said it. "I want to go to Whale's Mouth. By ship. Not by Dr. von Einem's Telpor. And by my own ship, by what we meant to be our—" He broke off. "I want to take her all the way to Fomalhaut, on an eighteen-year voyage—alone. And when I arrive at Whale's Mouth I'll prove—"

"Yes?" Freya said. "Prove what, Rachmael?"

"That we could have done it. Had von Einem not come along with that thing, that—" He gestured, with impotent fury.

Freya said, "Telpor is one of the most vital discoveries in human history, Rachmael. Teleportation, from one star-system to another, twenty-four light years in fifteen minutes. When you reach Whale's Mouth by the *Omphalos,* I for instance will be—" She calculated. "Forty-three years old."

He was silent.

"What," Freya asked in a soft voice, "would you accomplish by your trip?"

He said, honestly, "I—don't know."

PRESENTLY Freya said, reading from her folio, "You have, for six months now, been thoroughly checking out the *Omphalos* at a concealed—even from us—launch field and maintenance dock on Luna. She is now considered ready for the inter-system flight. Trails of Hoffman has tried, through the courts, to attach her to claim her as their legal property; this you have managed to fight. So far. But now—"

"My lawyers tell me," Rachmael said, "that three days stand between me and THL seizing the *Omphalos.*"

"You can't blast off within three days?"

"The deep-sleep equipment. It's a week from being readied." He let out his breath raggedly. "A subsidiary of THL manufactures vital components. They've been—*held up.*"

Freya nodded. "And your com-

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ing here is to request us," she said, "to pick up the *Omphalos*, with one of our veteran pilots, disappear with her for a week, until she's ready for the flight to Fomalhaut. Correct?"

"That's it," he said, and sat waiting. "I'm not good enough to lose her. They'd find me. But yours—one of your best." He did not look directly at her; it meant too much.

"You can pay our fee of—"

"Nothing. I have absolutely no funds. Later, as I continue to liquidate the assets of the corporation, possibly I—"

Freya said, "There's a note here, Xeroxed, from my employer, Mr. Glazer-Holliday. He observes that you're poscredless. His instructions to us—" She read the note, silently. "However, we're to cooperate with you, despite your financial helplessness." Glancing up at him she said, "We'll dispatch an experienced pilot who will take the *Omphalos* off where THL, where even the UN agents acting for the Secretary General, Herr Horst Bertold, won't find her. This our man can do—while you manage, if you can, to obtain the final components of the deep-sleep equipment." She smiled slightly. "But I doubt if you'll obtain those components, Rachmael; there's an additional memo here to that effect, too. You're right: Theodoric Ferry sits on its board of directors, too, and this is all legal, this monopoly which the firm possesses." Her smile was bitter. "UN sanctioned."

He was silent. Obviously it was hopeless; no matter how long the Lies Incorporated professional and ultra-veteran space-pilot kept the huge liner the *Omphalos* lost between planets, the components would be "held up unavoidably," as the invoices, marked back-order, would read.

"I think," Freya said presently, "that your problem is not the mere obtaining of deep-sleep components. That can be handled; there are ways . . . we, for instance, can—although this will cost you a good deal of money eventually—pick them up on the blackmarket. Your problem, Rachmael—"

"I know," he said. His problem was not *how* to get to the Fomalhaut system, to its ninth planet, Whale's Mouth which was Terra's sole thriving colony-world. In fact his problem was not the eighteen-year voyage at all.

His problem was—

Why go at all, when Dr. von Einem's Telpor construct, available at a nominal cost at any of Trails of Hoffman's many retail outlets on Terra, made the trip a mere fifteen minute minor journey, and within financial

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reach of even the most modest, income-wise speaking, Terran family?

Aloud he said, "Freya, the trip by Telpor to Whale's Mouth—it sounds fine." And forty million Terran citizens had taken advantage of it. And the aud and vid reports returning—via the Telpor construct—all told glowingly of a world not overcrowded, of tall grass, of odd but benign animals, of new and lovely cities built by robot-assists taken across at UN-expense to Whale's Mouth. "But—"

"But," Freya said, "the peculiar fact is that it's a one-way trip."

Instantly he nodded. "Yes, that's it. *No one can come back.*"

"That's easily explained. The Sol system is located at the axis of the universe; the recession of the extra-galactic nebulae demonstrate von Einem's Theorem One that—"

"There must," he said, "out of those forty million people, be *a few* who want to return. But the TV and 'pape reports say they're all ecstatically happy. You've seen the endless TV shows, life at Newcolonizedland. It's—"

"Too perfect, Rachmael?"

"Statistically, *malcontents must exist.* Why do we never hear of them? And we can't go and take a look." Because, if you went by Telpor to Whale's Mouth and saw, you were there, as they were, *to stay.* So if you did find malcontents—what could you do for them? Because you could not take them back; you could only join them. And he had the intuition that somehow this just wouldn't be of much use. Even the UN left Newcolonizedland alone, the countless UN welfare agencies, the personnel and bureaus newly set up by the present Secretary General Horst Bertold, from New Whole Germany: the largest political entity in Europe—even they stopped at the Telpor gates. Neues Einige Deutschland . . . N.E.D. Far more powerful than the mangy, dwindling French Empire or the U.K.—they were pale remnants of the past.

And New Whole Germany—as the election to UN Secretary General of Horst Bertold showed—was the Wave of the Future . . . as the Germans themselves liked to phrase it.

"SO in other words," Freya said, "you'd take an empty passenger liner to the Fomalhaut system, spend eighteen years in transit, you, the sole unteleported man, among the seven billion citizens of Terra, with the idea—or should I say, the hope?—that when you arrive finally at Whale's Mouth, in the year 2032, you'll find a passenger complement, five hundred or so unhappy souls who want out? And so

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you then can resume commercial operations . . . von Einem takes them there in fifteen minutes and then eighteen years later you return them to Terra, back home to the Sol system."

"Yes," he said fiercely.

"Plus another eighteen years —for them, too—for the flight back. For you thirty-six years in all. You'd return to Terra in the year—" She calculated. "2050 A.D. I'd be sixty-one years old; Theodoric Ferry, even Horst Bertold, would be dead; perhaps Trails of Hoffman Limited wouldn't even exist, any more . . . certainly Dr. Sepp von Einem would be dead years ago; let's see: he's in his eighties now. No, he'd never live to see you reach Whale's Mouth, let alone return. So if all this is to make him feel bad—"

"Is it insane?" Rachmael said. "To believe, first, that *some* unhappy persons must be stuck at Whale's Mouth . . . and yet we're not hearing, via THL's monopoly of all info media, all energy, passing back this way. And second—"

"And second," Freya said, "to want to spend eighteen years of your life in getting there to rescue them." Professional, intent, she eyed him. "Is this idealism? Or is this vengeance against Dr. von Einem because of his Telpor construct that made your family's liners and commercial carriers obsolete for inter-system travel? After all, if you do manage to leave in the *Omphalos*, it'll be big news, a novelty; it'll be fully covered on TV and in the 'papes, here on Terra; even the UN won't be able to squelch the story—the first, sole, *manned* vessel to go to Fomalhaut, not just one of those old-time instrument packages. Why, you'd be a time capsule; we'd all be waiting for you to arrive first there and then, in 2050, back here."

"A time capsule," he said, "like the one fired off at Whale's Mouth. Which never arrived here on Terra."

She shrugged. "Passed Terra by, was attracted by the sun's gravitational field; was swallowed up unnoticed."

"Unnoticed by *any* tracking station? Out of over six thousand separate monitoring devices in orbit in the Sol system *none* detected the time capsule when it arrived?"

Frowning, Freya siad, "What do you mean to imply, Rachmael?"

"The time capsule," Rachmael said, "from Whale's Mouth, the launching of which we watched years ago on TV—it wasn't detected by our tracking stations because it never arrived. And it never arrived, Miss Holm, because despite those crowd scenes *it was never sent.*"

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"You mean what we saw on TV—"

"The vid signal, via Telpor," Rachmael said, "which showed the happy masses at Whale's Mouth cheering at the vast public launching ceremony of the time capsule—were fakes. I've run and rerun recordings of them; the crowd noise is spurious." Reaching into his cloak he brought out a seven-inch reel of iron oxide Ampex aud tape; he tossed it onto her desk. "Play it back. Carefully. *There were no people cheering.* And for a good reason. Because no time capsule, containing quaint artifacts from the Fomalhaut ancient civilizations, was launched from Whale's Mouth."

"But—" She stared at him in disbelief, then picked up the aud tape, held the reel uncertainly. *"Why?"*

"I don't know," Rachmael said. "But when the *Omphalos* reaches the Fomalhaut system and Whale's Mouth and I see Newcolonizedland, I'll know." And, he thought, I don't think I'll find ten or sixty malcontents out of forty million . . . by that time, of course, it'll be something like a billion colonists. I'll find—

He ended the thought abruptly. He did not know.

But eventually he would know. In the little matter of eighteen years.

II

IN the sybaritic living room of his villa, on his satellite as it orbited Terra, the owner of Lies Incorporated, Matson Glazer-Holliday, sat in his human-made dressing gown smoking a prize, rare Antonio y Cleopatra cigar and listening to the aud tape of the crowd noises.

And, directly before him, he watched the oscilloscope as it transformed the audio signal into a visual one.

To Freya Holm he said, "Yes, there is a cycle. You can see it, even though you can't hear it. This aud-track is continuous, running over and over again. Hence the man's right; it's a fake."

"Could Rachmael ben Applebaum have—"

"No," Matson said. "I've sequestered an aud copy from the UN info archives; it agrees. Rachmael didn't tamper with the tape; it's exactly what he claims it to be." He sat back, pondering.

Strange, he thought, that von Einem's Telpor gadget works only one way, radiating matter out . . . with no return of that matter, at least by teleportation, possible. So, rather conveniently for Trails of Hoffman, all we get via Telpor as a feedback from Whale's Mouth is an electronic signal, energy alone . . . and this

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one now exposed as a fake; as a research agency I should have discovered this long ago—Rachmael, with all his creditors hounding him jet-balloonwise, keeping him awake night and day, hammering at him with countless technological assists, impeding him in the normal course of conducting routine business, has detected this spuriousness, and I—damn it, Matson thought; I missed, here. He felt gloomy.

"Cutty Sark Scotch and water?" Freya asked.

He nodded absently as Freya, who was his mistress, disappeared into the liquor antechamber of the villa to see if the 1985 bottle—worth a fortune—were empty yet.

But, on the credit side, he had been suspicious.

From the start he had doubted the so-called "Theorem One" of Dr. von Einem; it sounded too much like a cover, this one-way transmission by the technicians of THL's multitude of retail outlets. Write home from Whale's Mouth, son, when you get there, he thought acidly; tell your old mom how it is on the colony world with its fresh air, sunshine, all those cute little animals, those wondrous buildings THL robots are constructing . . . and the report-back, the letter, *as electronic signal*, had duly arrived. But the beloved son; he could not personally, directly report. Could not return to tell his story, and, as in the ancient story of the lion's den, all the footprints of guileless creatures led *in* to the den, yet none led *out*. It was the fable all over again—with something even more sinister added. That of what appeared more and more to be a thoroughly phony trail of *outgoing* tracks: the electronic message-units. By someone who is versed in sophisticated hardware, Matson thought; someone is tinkering around, and is there any reason to look beyond the figure of Dr. Sepp von Einem himself, the inventor of the Telpor, plus Neues Einige Deutschland's very efficient technicians who ran Ferry's retail machinery?

There was something he did not like about those German technicians who manned the Telpors. So business-like. As their ancestors must have been, Matson mused. Back in the twentieth century when those ancestors, with the same affectless calm, fed bodies into ovens or living humans into ersatz shower baths which turned out to be Zyklon B hydrogen cyanide gas chambers. And financed by reputable big Third Reich business, by Herr Krupp u. Sohnen. Just as von Einem is financed by Trails of Hoffman, with its vast central offices in Grosser Berlin-

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stadt—the new capital of New Whole Germany, the city in fact from which our distinguished UN Secretary General emanates.

"Get me," Matson said to Freya, "instead of Scotch and water, the file on Horst Bertold."

IN the other room Freya rang up the autonomic research equipment wired into the walls of the villa . . . electronic hardware, minned—miniaturized—for the most part, of a data-sorting and receiving nature, plus the file-banks, and—

Certain useful artifacts which did *not* involve data but which involved high-velocity A-warhead darts that, were the satellite to be attacked by any of the UN's repertory of offensive weapons, would take up the fight and abolish the missiles before they reached their target.

At his villa on his Brocard ellipse satellite Matson was safe. And, as a precaution, he conducted as much business as possible from this spot; below, in New New York City, at Lies Incorporated's offices, he always felt naked. Felt, in fact, the nearby presence of the UN and Horst Bertold's legions of "Peace Workers," those armed, gray-faced men and women who, in the name of Pax Terrae, roamed the world, even into the pathetic moonies, the sad, failure-but-still-extant early "colony" satellites which had come before von Einems' breakthrough and the discovery by George Hoffman of Fomalhaut IX, now called Whale's Mouth and now *the* colony.

Too bad, Matson thought archly, that George Hoffman didn't discover more planets in more star systems habitable by us, the frail reeds of living, sentient, mentating biochemical upright bipeds which we humans are. Hundreds and hundreds of planets, but—

Instead, temperatures which melted thermo-fuses. No air. No soil. No water.

One could hardly say of such worlds—Venus had proved a typical example—that the "living was easy." The living, in fact, on such worlds was confined to homeostatic domes with their own at, wa, and self-regu temp.

Housing, per dome, perhaps three hundred somatic souls. Rather a small number, considering that of this year Terra's population stood at seven billion.

"Here," Freya said, sliding down to seat herself, legs tucked under her, on the deep-pile *wool* carpet near Matson. "The file on H.B." She opened it at random; Lies Incorporated field reps had done a thorough job: many data existed here that, via the UN's carefully-watchdogged

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info media, never had reached the public, even the so-called "critical" analysts and columnists. They could, by law, criticise to their hearts' content, the character, habits, abilities and shaving-customs of Herr Bertold . . . except, however, the basic facts were denied them.

Not so, however, to Lies Incorporated—an ironic sobriquet, in view of the absolutely verified nature of the data now before its owner.

It was harsh reading. Even for him.

The year of Horst Bertold's birth: 1954. Slightly before the Space Age had begun; like Matson Glazer-Holliday, Horst was a remnant of the old world when all that had been glimpsed in the sky were "flying saucers," a misnomer for a U.S. Air Force antimissile weapon which had, in the brief confrontation of 1982, proved ineffectual. Horst had been born to middleclass Berlin —West Berlin, it had then been called, because, and this was difficult to remember, Germany had in those days been divided—parents: his father had owned a meat market . . . rather fitting, Matson reflected, in that Horst's father had been an S.S. officer and former member of an Einsatzgruppe which had murdered thousands of innocent persons of Slavic and Jewish ancestry . . . although this had not interfered with Johann Bertold's meat market business in the 1950s and '60s. And then, in 1972, at the age of eighteen, young Horst himself had entered the spotlight (needless to say, the statute of limitations had run out on his father, who had never been prosecuted by the West German legal apparatus for his crimes of the '40s, and had, in addition, evaded the commando squads from Israel who, by 1970, had closed up shop, given up the task of tracking down the former mass-murderers). Horst, in 1972, had been a leader in the Reinholt Jugend.

Ernst Reinholt, from Hamburg, had headed a party which had striven to unify Germany once more; the deal would be that as a military and economic power she would be neutral between East and West. It had taken ten more years, but in the fracas of 1982 he had obtained from the U.S. and the U.SS.R. what he wanted: a united, free Germany, called by its present name, and just chuck full of vim and *Macht*.

And, under Reinholt, Neues Einige Deutschland had played dirty pool from the start. But no one was really surprised; East and West were busy erecting tents where major popcens—population centers such as Chicago and Moscow—had existed, and hoping to god that the Sino-

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Cuban wing of the C.P. did not, taking advantage of the situation, move in and entrench . . .

It had been the secret protocol of Reinholt and his N.W.G. that it would not be neutral after all. On the contrary.

New Whole Germany would take out China.

So this was the unsavory basis on which the Reich had reobtained unity Its *Waffen* technicians had devised, as instructed, weapons which had, in 1987, dealt a terminal punch to People's China. Matson, examining the folio, very rapidly scanned this part, because the Reich had come up with some show-stoppers, and even the abominable U.S. nerve gas had seemed like a field of daisies in comparison—he did not wish to see any mention of what Krupp u. Sohnen had devised as an answer to China's thousands of millions who were spilling as far west as the Volga, and, toward the U.S., were crossing from Siberia—taken in 1983—into Alaska. In any case the compact had been agreed on, and even Faust would have blanched at it; now the world had no People's China but a New Whole Germany to contend with.

And what a quid pro quo that had proved to be. Because, correctly and legally, Neues Einige Deutschland had obtained control of the sole planet-wide and hence Sol system-wide governing structure, the UN. They held it now. And the former member of the Reinholt Jugend, Horst Bertold, was its Secretary General. And had faced squarely, as he had promised when campaigning for election—it had become, by 1985, an elective office—that he would deal with the colonization problem; he would find a Final Solution to the tormented condition that (one) Terra was as overpopulated throughout as Japan had been in 1960 and (two) both the alternate planets of the Sol system and the moonies and the domes et al. had failed wretchedly.

Horst had found, via Dr. von Einem's Telpor teleportation construct, a habitable planet in a star system too far from Sol to be reached by the quondam drayage enterprise of Maury Applebaum. Whale's Mouth, and the Telpor mechanisms at Trails of Hoffman's retail outlets, were *the* answer.

To all appearances it was duck soup, feathers, scut included. But—

"See?" Matson said to Freya. "Here's the written transcript of Horst Bertold's speech before he was elected and before von Einem showed up with the Telpor gadget. *The promise was made before teleportation to the Fomalhaut system was techno-*

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logically possible—in fact, before the existence of Fomalhaut was even known to unmanned elderly relay-monitors."

"So?"

Matson said grimly, "So our UN Secretary General had a mandate before he had a solution. And to the German mind that means one thing and one thing only. The cat and rat farm solution." Or, as he now suspected, the dog food factory solution.

It had been suggested, ironically, in imitation of Swift, by a fiction writer of the 1950s, that the "Negro Question" in the U.S. be solved by the building of giant factories which made Negroes into canned dog food. Satire, of course, like Swift's *A Modest Proposal,* that the problem of starvation among the Irish be solved by the eating of the children . . . Swift himself lamenting, as a final irony, that he had no children of his own to offer to the market for consumption. Grisly. But—

This all pointed to the seriousness—not merely of the problem of overpopulation and insufficient food production—but to the insane, schizoid solutions seriously being considered. The brief World War Three—never officially called that; called, instead, a Pacifying Action, just as the Korean War had been a "Police Action"—had taken care of a few millions of people, but —not quite enough. As a solution it had worked to a partial extent; and was, in many influential quarters, viewed exactly as that: as a partial solution. Not as a catastrophe but as a half-answer.

And Horst Bertold had promised the balance of the answer.

Whale's Mouth was it.

"So in my opinion," Matson murmured, to himself mostly, "I've always been suspicious of Whale's Mouth. If I hadn't read Swift and C. Wright Mills and the Herman Kahn Report for Rand Corporation . . ." He glanced at Freya. "There have," he said, "always been people who would solve the problem that way." *And I think,* he thought, as he listened to the aud tape of the crowd noises, a tape which pretended to consist of a transcript from the launching, at Whale's Mouth, of the ritualistic, celebration-inspired time capsule back through hyper-space—or in some such ultra high velocity fashion—to Terra, *that we have those people and that solution with us again.*

We have, in other words, UN Secretary General Horst Bertold and Trails of Hoffman Limited and its economic multi-pseudopodia empire. And dear Dr. Sepp von Einem and his many Telpor outlets, his curiously *one way* teleporting machine.

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"That land," Matson murmured, vaguely quoting, lord knew who, what sage of the past, "which all of us must visit one day . . . that land beyond the grave. But no one has returned to report on't. And until they do—"

Freya said perceptively, "Until they do, you're going to stay suspicious. Of the whole New-colonizedland settlement. Aud and vid signals are not good enough to convince you—because *you* know how easily they can be faked." She gestured at the deck running the tape at this very moment.

"A client," Matson corrected her. "Who on a nonverbal level, what our Reich friends call *thinking with the blood,* suspects that if he takes his one remaining inter-stellar worthy flagship, the—" What was it called? "The *Navel,*" he said. "The *Omphalos*; that's what that lofty Greek word means, by the way. Takes the *Navel* direct to Fomalhaut, that after eighteen years of weary deep-sleep which is not quite sleep, more a hypnagogic, restless tossing and turning at low temp, slowed-down metabolism, he will arrive at Whale's Mouth, and oddly it will not be beer and skittles. It will not be happy conapt dwellers, smiling children in autonomic schools, tame, exotic, native life forms. But—"

But just what would he find?

If, as he suspected, the aud and vid tracks passing from Whale's Mouth to Terra via von Einem's Telpor mechanisms were covers—what reality lay beneath?

HE simply could not guess, not when forty million people were involved. The dog food factory? Are, god forbid, those forty million men, women and children *dead?* Is is a boneyard, with no one there, no one even to extract the gold from their teeth —because now we use stainless steel?

He did not know, but—someone knew. Perhaps entire New Whole Germany, which, having cornered the lion's share of power in the UN, hence ruled throughout the nine planets of the Sol system; perhaps as a totality it, on a subrational, instinctive level, knew. As, in the 1940s, it had intuited the existence of the gas chambers beyond the cages of twittering birds and those high walls that kept out all sight and sound . . . and except for that oddly acrid smoke from chimneys all day long—

"They know," Matson said aloud. Horst Bertold knew, and so did Theodoric Ferry the owner of THL, and so did doddering but still crafty old Dr. von Einem. And the one hundred and thirty-five million inhabitants of

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Neues Einige Deutschland, to some degree; not verbally—you couldn't put an expert psych rep of Lies Incorporated in a small room with a Munich cobbler, run a few routine drug-injections, make the standard quasi-Psionic transcripts, EEGs of his para-psychological reactions, and learn, know, the literal, exact truth.

The whole matter was, damn it, still obscured. And this time it was not cages of twittering birds or shower baths but something else—something, however, equally effective. Trails of Hoffman published 3-D, multi-color, brilliantly artistic, exciting brochures displaying the ecstatic life beyond the Telpor nexus; the TV ran ceaseless, drive-you-mad ads all day and night, of the underpopulated veldt landscape of Whale's Mouth, the balmy climate (via olfactory track), the warm the-answer-is-yes two-moon-filled nights . . . it was a land of romance, freedom, experimentation, kibbutzim without the desert: cooperative living where oranges grew *naturally*, and as large as grapefruits, which themselves resembled melons or the breasts of the women there. But.

Matson decided carefully, "I am sending a veteran field rep across, via normal Telpor, posing as an unmarried businessman who hopes to open a watch repair retail shop at Whale's Mouth. He will have grafted subderm a high-gain transmitter; it will—"

"I know," Freya said patiently; this was evening and she obviously wished for a relaxation of the grim reality of their mutual business. "It will regularly release a signal at ultra-high-frequency on a non-used band, which will ultimately be picked up here. But that'll take *weeks*."

"Okay." He had it now. The Lies Incorporated field rep would send back a letter, via Telpor, in the customary manner encoded. It was that simple. If the letter arrived: fine. If not—

"You will wait," Freya said, "and wait. And no encoded letter will come. And then you will really begin to think that our client, Mr. ben Applebaum, has tripped over something ominous and huge in the long darkness which is our collective life. And *then* what will you do? Go across yourself?"

"Then I'm sending you," Matson said. "As the field rep there."

"No," she said, instantly.

"So Whale's Mouth frightens you. Despite all the glossy, expensive literature available free."

"I know Rachmael is right. I knew it when he walked in the door; I knew it from your memo. I'm not going; that's that." She faced her employer-paramour calmly.

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"Then I'll draw at random from the field-personnel pool." He had not been serious; why should he offer his mistress as a pawn in this? But he had proved what he wished to prove: their joint fears were not merely intellectual. At this point in their thinking neither Freya nor he would risk the crossing via Telpor to Whale's Mouth, as thousands of guileless citizens of Terra, lugging their belongings and with innocent high hopes, did daily.

I hate, he thought, to turn anyone into the goat. But—

"Pete Burnside. Rep. in Detroit. We'll tell him we wish to set up a Lies Incorporated branch at Whale's Mouth under a cover name. Hardware store. Or TV fixit shop. Get his folio; see what talents he has." We'll make one of our own people, Matson thought, the victim—and it hurt, made him sick. And yet it should have been done months ago.

But it had taken bankrupt Rachmael ben Applebaum to goose them into acting, he realized. A man pursued by those monster creditor balloons that bellow all your personal defects and secrets. A man willing to undergo a *thirty-six year trip* to prove that something is foul in the land of milk and protein on the far side of those Telpor gates through which, on receipt of five poscreds, any adult Terran can avail himself for the purpose of—

God knew.

God—and the German hierarchy dominating the UN plus THL; he had no illusions about that: *they* did not need to analyze the crowd-noise track of the time capsule ceremony at Whale's Mouth to know.

As he had. And his job was investigation; he was, he realized with spurting, burgeoning horror, possibly the only individual on Terra *really* in a position to push through and obtain an authentic glimpse of this.

Short of eighteen years of space flight . . . a time-period which would allow infinite millions, even a billion if the extrapolations were correct, to pass by way of Telpor constructs on that —to him—terrifying one-way trip to the colony world.

If you are wise, Matson said to himself grimly, you never take one-way trips. Anywhere. Even to Boise, Idaho . . . even across the street. Be certain, when you start, *that you can scramble back.*

III

AT one in the morning Rachmael ben Applebaum was yanked from his sleep—this was usual, because the assorted creditor-mechanisms had been getting to him on a round-the-clock basis, now. However this time it was no

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robot raptor-like creditor mechanism. This was a man. Dark, a Negro; small and shrewd-looking. Standing at Rachmael's door with i.d. papers extended.

"From Listening Instructional Educational Services," the Negro said. He added, "I hold a Class-A inter-plan vehicle pilot-license."

That woke Rachmael. "You're going to take the *Omphalos* off Luna?"

"If I can find her." The dark, small man smiled briefly. "May I come in? I'd like you to accompany me to your maintenance yard on Luna so there's no mistake; I know your employees there are armed; otherwise—" He followed Rachmael into the conapt living room—the sole room, in fact: living-conditions on Terra being what they were. "Otherwise Trails of Hoffman would be ferrying equipment to their domes on Mars with the *Omphalos* as of last month—right?"

"Right," Rachmael said as he blearily dressed.

"My name's Al Dosker. And I did you a small side-favor, Mr. ben Applebaum. I took out a creditor-construct waiting in the hall." He displayed, then, a side arm. "I suppose, if it got into litigation, it'd be called 'property destruct.' Anyhow, when you and I leave, no THL device is going to monitor our path." He added, half to himself, "That I could detect, anyhow." At his chest he patted a variety of *bug chasers*; minned electronic instruments that recorded the presence of vid and aud receptors in the vicinity.

Shortly the two men were on their way to the roof field, where Dosker had parked his—as Rachmael discovered—taxi-marked flapple. As they entered he noticed how ordinary it looked . . . but as it arced into the night sky he blinked at its velocity and accepted the fact that this was not the usual thrust which now impelled them; they had hit 3.5 Machs within micro-seconds.

"You'll direct me," Dosker said. "Since even we at Lies Incorporated don't know where you've got the *Omphalos;* you did a good job of berthing her, or perhaps we're beginning to slip . . . or both."

"Okay." At the 3-D Lunar map he took hold of the locating trailing-arm, linked the pivot in position, then swept out a route until the terminus of the arm touched the recessed locus where his technicians worked busily at the *Omphalos*—worked, while waiting for parts which would never come.

"We're off course," Dosker said, abruptly. Speaking not to Rachmael but into his console mike. "Poohed."

Phooed—a trade term, and Rachmael felt fear, because the word was a condensation of P.U.

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—picked up. Picked up by a field, and this one was moving Dosker's small flapple out of its trajectory; at once Dosker fired the huge Whetstone-Milton rockets, tried to reassert with their enormous strength homeo-course . . . but the field continued to tug, even against the millions of pounds of thrust of the twin engines, as both fired in unison, acting as retro-jets against the field exerting its presence unseen but, on a variety of console instruments, registering.

Rachmael, after an interval of strained, wordless silence, said to Dosker, "Where's it taking us?"

"From a Three to L course," Dosker said laconically.

"Not to Luna, then." They would not, the two of them, reach the *Omphalos*' place of berth; that was now clear. But—where instead?

"We're in T-orb," Dosker said. Orbit around Earth, despite the push of the two W-M engines; Dosker now, reluctantly, cut them. Fuel for them had no doubt dropped to a dangerously low level: if the field let go they would orbit anyhow, orbit without the possibility of being capable of creating a trajectory that would lead to an ultimate landing either on Luna *or* on Terra. "They've got us," Dosker said, then, half to Rachmael and half into the mike that projected from the ship's console. He recited a series of encoded instructions into the mike, listened, then cursed, said to Rachmael, "We're cut off aud and vid, all signal-contact; I'm not getting through to Matson. So that's it."

"That's what?" Rachmael demanded. "You mean we give up? We just orbit Terra forever and die when we run out of oxygen?" Was this the fight that Lies Incorporated put up when faced by Trails of Hoffman? He, alone, had held out better; now he was disgusted, astonished and completely perplexed, and he watched without comprehension as Dosker inspected his bank of *bug chasers* at his chest. At the moment the Lies Incorporated pilot seemed interested only in whether or not monitors were picking them up—as well as controlling, externally, the trajectory of their ship.

Dosker said, "No monitors. Look, friend ben Applebaum." He spoke swiftly. "They cut my transmission on aud by micro-relay to Matson's satellite, but of course— His dark eyes glinted with amusement. "I have on me a dead man's throttle; if a continuous signal from me is interrupted it automatically sets off an alarm at Lies Incorporated, at its main offices in New York and also at Matson's satellite. So by now they know something's happened." He lowered his voice, speaking almost to himself alone.

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"We'll have to wait to find out if they can get to us before it doesn't matter."

THE ship, without power, in orbit, glided silently.

And then, jarringly, something nosed it; Rachmael fell; sliding along the floor to the far wall he saw Dosker tumble, too, and knew that this had been the locking of another ship or similar device against them—knew and then all at once realized that at least it hadn't detonated. At least it had not been a missile. Because if it had—

"They could," Dosker said, as he got unsteadily to his feet, "have taken us out permanently." By that he, too, meant a detonating weapon. He turned toward the tri-stage entrance hatch, used for null-atmosphere penetration.

The hatch, its circular seal-controls spun from impulses emanating outside, swung open.

Three men, two of them riffraff with lasers, with the decayed eyes of those who had been bought, hamstrung, lost long ago, came first. And then a clear-faced elegant man who would never be bought because he was a great buyer in the market of men; he was a dealer, not produce for sale.

It was Theodoric Ferry, chairman of the board of Trails of Hoffman Limited. Ahead of him his two employees swung a vacuum-cleaner-like mechanism; it searched, buzzing and nosing, probing until its operators were satisfied; they nodded to Theodoric, who then addressed Rachmael.

"May I seat myself?"

After a startled pause Rachmael said, "Sure."

"Sorry, Mr. Ferry," Dosker said. "The only seat is taken." He sat at the control console in such a way that his small body had expanded at its base to fill both bucket seats; his face was hard and hating.

Shrugging, the large, white-haired man said, "All right." He eyed Dosker. "You're Lies' top pilot, aren't you? Al Dosker . . . yes, I recognize you from the clips we've made of you. On your way to the *Omphalos*. But you don't need Applebaum here to tell you where she is; *we* can tell you." Theodoric Ferry dug into his cloak, brought out a small packet which he tossed to Al Dosker. "The locus of the dry-docks where Applebaum has got her."

"Thanks, Mr. Ferry," Dosker said with sarcasm so great that his voice was almost forged into incomprehensibility.

Theodoric said, "Now look, Dosker; you sit quietly and mind your own business. While I talk to Applebaum. I've never met him personally, but I knew his very-much-missed late father." He extended his hand.

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Dosker said, "If you shake with him, Rachmael, he'll deposit a virus contamination that'll produce liver toxicity within your system inside an hour."

Glowering, Theodoric said to the Negro, "I asked you to stay in your place. A pun." He then removed the membrane-like, up-to-now invisible glove of plastic which covered his hand. So Dosker had been right, Rachmael realized as he watched Theodoric carefully deposit the glove in the ship's incinerating disposal-chute. "Anyhow," Theodoric said, almost plaintively, "we could have squirted feral airborne bacteria around by now."

"And taken out yourselves," Dosker pointed out.

Theodoric shrugged. Then, speaking carefully to Rachmael, he said, "I respect what you're trying to do. Don't laugh."

"I was not," Rachmael said, "laughing. Just surprised."

"You want to keep functioning, after the economic collapse; you want to keep your legitimate creditors from attaching the few —actually sole—asset that Applebaum Enterprise still possesses—good for you, Rachmael. I'd have done the same. And you impressed Matson; that's why he's supplying you his only decent pilot."

With a mild grin, Dosker reached into his pocket for a pack of cigarillos; at once the two decayed-eyed men accompanying Theodoric caught his arm, expertly manipulated it—the harmless pack of cigarillos fell to the floor of the ship.

One after another, the cigarillos were cut open by Theodoric's men, inspected . . . the fifth one turned out to be hard; it did not yield to the sharp-bladed pocket knife, and, a moment later, a more complex analytical device showed the cigarillo to be a homeostatic cephalotropic dart.

"Whose Alpha-wave pattern?" Theodoric Ferry asked Dosker.

"Yours," Dosker said tonelessly. He watched without affect as the two decayed-eyed but very expert employees of THL crushed the dart under heel, rendering it useless.

"Then you expected me," Ferry said, looking a little nonplussed.

Dosker said, "Mr. Ferry, I *always* expect you."

Returning once more to Rachmael, Theodoric Ferry said, "I admire you and I want to terminate this conflict between you and THL. We have an inventory of your assets. Here." He extended a sheet toward Rachmael; at that, Rachmael turned toward Dosker for advice.

"Take it," Dosker said.

ACCEPTING the sheet, Rachmael scanned it. The inventory was accurate; these did con-

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stitute the slight totality of the remaining assets of Applebaum Enterprise. And—glaringly, as Ferry had said, the only item of any authentic value was the *Omphalos* herself, the great liner plus the repair and maintenance facilities on Luna which now, hive-like, surrounded and checked her as she waited futilely . . . he returned the inventory to Ferry, who, seeing his expression, nodded.

"We agree, then," Theodoric Ferry said. "Okay. Here's what I propose, Applebaum. You can keep the *Omphalos*. I'll instruct my legal staff to withdraw the writ to the UN courts demanding that the *Omphalos* be placed under a state of attachment."

Dosker, startled, grunted; Rachmael stared at Ferry.

"What," Rachmael said, then, "in return?"

"This. That the *Omphalos* never leave the Sol system. You can very readily develop a profitable operation transporting passengers and cargo between the nine planets and to Luna. Despite the fact—"

"Despite the fact," Rachmael said, "that the *Omphalos* was built as an inter-stellar carrier, not inter-plan. It's like using—"

"It's that," Ferry said, "or lose the *Omphalos* to us."

"So Rachmael agrees," Dosker spoke up, "not to take the *Omphalos* to Fomalhaut. The written agreement won't mention any one particular star system, but it's not Prox and not Alpha. Right, Ferry?"

After a pause Theodoric Ferry said, "Take it or leave it."

Rachmael said, "Why, Mr. Ferry? *What's wrong at Whale's Mouth?* This deal—it proves I'm right." That was obvious; he saw it, Dosker saw it—and Ferry must have known that in making it he was ratifying their intimations. Limit the *Omphalos* to the nine planets of the Sol system? And yet—the corporation Applebaum Enterprise, as Ferry said, *would continue;* it would live on as a legal, economic entity. And Ferry would see that the UN turned a certain amount, an acceptable quantity, of commerce its way. Rachmael would wave goodbye to Lies Incorporated, to first this small dark superior space pilot, and then, by extension, to Freya Holm, to Matson Glazer-Holliday, cut in effect himself off from the sole power which had chosen to back him.

"Go ahead," Dosker said. "Accept the deal. After all, the deep-sleep components won't arrive, but it won't matter, because you're not going into 'tween system space anyhow." He looked tired.

Theodoric Ferry said, "Your father, Rachmael; Maury would have done anything to keep the *Omphalos*. You know in two days

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we'll have her—and once we do, there's no chance you'll ever get her back. Think about it."

"I—know right now," Rachmael said. Lord, if he and Dosker had managed to get the *Omphalos* out tonight, lost her in space where THL couldn't find her . . . and yet that was already over; it had ended when the field had overcome the enormous futile thrust of the twin engines of Dosker's Lies Incorporated ship: Trails of Hoffman had stepped in too soon. In time.

All along, Theodoric Ferry had pre-thought them; it was not a moral issue: it was a pragmatic one.

"I have legal forms drawn up," Ferry said. "If you'll come with me." He nodded toward the hatch. "The law requires three witnesses. On the part of THL, we have those witnesses." He smiled, because it was over and he knew it. Turning, he walked leisurely toward the hatch. The two decayed-eyed employees followed, both men relaxed . . . they passed into the open circularity of the hatch—

And then convulsed throughout, from scalp to foot, internally destroyed; as Rachmael, shocked and terrified, watched, he saw their neurological, musculature systems give out; he saw them, both men penetrated entirely, so that each became, horrifying him, flopping, quivering, malfunctioning—more than malfunctioning: each unit of their bodies fought with all other portions, so that the two heaps on the floor became warring subsyndromes within themselves, as muscle strained against muscle, visceral apparatus against diaphragmatic strength, auricular and ventricular fibrillation; both men, unable to breathe, deprived even of blood-circulation, staring, fighting within their bodies which were no longer true bodies . . .

Rachmael looked away.

"Cholinesterase - destroying gas," Dosker said, behind him, and at that instant Rachmael became aware of the tube pressed to his own neck, a medical artifact which had injected into his blood stream its freight of atropine, the antidote to the vicious nerve gas of the notorious FMC Corporation, the original contractors for this, the most destructive of all anti-personnel weapons of the previous war.

"Thanks," Rachmael said to Dosker, as he saw, now, the hatch swing shut; the Trails of Hoffman satellite, with its now inert field, was being detached—within it persons who were *not* THL employees pried it loose from Dosker's flapple.

THE dead man's throttle signalling device—or rather null-signalling device—had done

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its job; Lies Incorporated experts had arrived and at this moment were systematically dismantling the THL equipment.

Philosophically, Theodoric Ferry stood with his hands in the pockets of his cloak, saying nothing, not even noticing the spasms of his two employees on the floor near him, as if, by deteriorating in response to the gas, they had somehow proved unworthy.

"It was nice," Rachmael managed to say to Dosker, as the hatch once more swung open, this time admitting several employees of Lies Incorporated, "that your co-workers administered the atropine to Ferry as well as to me." Generally, in this business, no one was spared.

Dosker, studying Ferry, said, "He was given no atropine." Reaching, he withdrew the empty tube with its injecting needle from his own neck, then the counterpart item from Rachmael's. "How come, Ferry?" Dosker said.

There was, from Ferry, no answer.

"Impossible," Dosker said. "Every living organism is—" Suddenly he grabbed Ferry's arm; grunting, he swung brusquely the arm back, against its normal span—and yanked.

Theodoric Ferry's arm, at the shoulder-joint, came off. Revealing trailing conduits and minned components, those of the shoulder still functioning, those of the arm, deprived of power, now inert.

"A sim," Dosker said. Seeing that Rachmael did not comprehend he said, "A simulacrum of Ferry that of course has no neurological system. So Ferry was never here." He tossed the arm away. "Naturally; why should a man of his stature risk himself? He's probably sitting in his demesne satellite orbiting Mars, viewing this through the sense-extensors of the sim." To the one-armed Ferry-construct he said harshly, "*Are* we in genuine contact with you, Ferry, through this? Or is it on homeo? I'm just curious."

The mouth of the Ferry simulacrum opened and it said, "I hear you, Dosker. Would you, as an act of humanitarian kindness, administer atropine to my two THL employees?"

"It's being done," Dosker said. He walked over to Rachmael, then. "Well, our humble ship, on acute examination, seems never to have been graced by the presence of the chairman of the board of THL." He grinned shakily. "I feel cheated."

But the offer made by Ferry via the simulacrum, Rachmael realized. *That* had been genuine.

Dosker said, "Let's go to Luna, now. As your advisor I'm

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telling you—" He put his hand, gripped harshly, on Rachmael's wrist. "Wake up. Those two gnugs will be all right, once the atropine is administered; they won't be killed and we'll release them in their THL vehicle—minus its field, of course. You and I will go on to Luna, to the *Omphalos*, as if nothing happened. Or if you won't I'll use the map the sim gave me; I'm taking the *Omphalos* out into 'tween space where THL can't tail her, even if you don't want me to."

"But," Rachmael said woodenly, "something did happen. An offer was made."

"That offer," Dosker said, "proves that THL is willing to sacrifice a great deal to keep you from your eighteen year trip to Fomalhaut for a look at Whale's Mouth. And—" He eyed Rachmael. "Yet that makes you *less* interested in getting the *Omphalos* out into unchartered space between planets where Ferry's trackers can't—"

I could save the *Omphalos*, Rachmael thought. But the man beside him was correct; this meant of course that he had to go on: Ferry had removed the block, had proved the need of the eighteen year flight.

"But the deep-sleep components," he said.

"Just get me to her," Dosker said quietly, patiently. "Okay, Rachmael ben Applebaum? Will you do that?" The controlled and very professional voice penetrated; Rachmael nodded. "I want the locus from you, not from the chart that sim gave me; I've decided I'm not touching that. I'm waiting for you, Rachmael, for you to decide."

"Yes," Rachmael said, then, and walked stiffly to the ship's 3-D Lunar map with its trailing arm; he seated himself and began to fix the locus for the hard-eyed, dark, Lies Incorporated ultra-experienced pilot.

IV

AT the Fox's Lair, the minute French restaurant in downtown San Diego, the maitre d' glanced at the name which Rachmael ben Applebaum had jotted down on the sheet with its fancy, undulating, pseudo-living letterhead and said, "Yes. Mr. Applebaum. It is—" He examined his wristwatch. "Now eight o'clock." A line of well-cloaked people waited; it was always this way on crowded Terra: any restaurant, even the bad ones, were overfilled each night from five o'clock on, and this was hardly a mediocre restaurant, let alone an outright bad one. "Genet," the maitre d' called to a waitress wearing the lace stockings and partial jacket-vest combination now popular: it left one breast,

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the right, exposed, and its nipple was elegantly capped by a Swiss ornament with many minned parts; the ornament, shaped like a large gold pencil eraser, played semi-classical music and lit up in a series of attractive shifting light-patterns which focussed on the floor ahead of her, lighting her way so that she could pass among the closely-placed tiny tables of the restaurant.

"Yes, Gaspar," the girl said, with a toss of her blonde, high-piled hair.

"Escort Mr. Applebaum to table twenty-two," the maitre d' told her, and ignored, with stoic, glacial indifference, the outrage among those customers lined up wearily ahead of Rachmael.

"I don't want to—" Rachmael began, but the maitre d' cut him off.

"All arranged. *She* is waiting at twenty-two." And, in the maitre d's voice, everything was conveyed: full knowledge of an intricate erotic relationship which—alas—did not, at least as yet, exist.

Rachmael followed Genet, with her light-emanating useful Swiss-made nipple-assist, through the darkness, the noise of people eating in jammed proximity, bolting their meals with the weight of guilt hunching them, getting done and aside so that those waiting could be served before the Fox's Lair, at two a.m., closed its kitchens . . . we are really pressed tight to one another, he thought, and then, all at once, Genet halted, turned; the nipple cap now radiated a soft, delightful and warm pale red aura which revealed, seated at table twenty-two, Freya Holm.

Seating himself opposite her, Rachmael said, "You don't light up."

"I could. And play the *Blue Danube* simultaneously." She smiled; in the darkness—the waitress had gone on, now—the dark-haired girl's eyes glowed. Before her rested a split of Buena Vista chablis, vintage 2002, one of the great, rare treats of the restaurant, and exceeding expensive; Rachmael wondered who would pick up the tab for this twelve-year-old California wine; lord knew he would have liked to, but—he reflexively touched his wallet. Freya noticed.

"Don't worry. Matson Glazer-Holliday owns this restaurant. There will be a tab for a mere six poscreds. For one peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich." She laughed, her dark eyes dancing in the reflected light from barely-illuminated overhead Japanese lanterns. "Does this place intimidate you?" she asked him, then.

"No. I'm just generally tense." For six days now the

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Omphalos had been lost—and even to him. Perhaps even to Matson. It could well be—necessary for security purposes—that only Al Dosker, at the multi-stage console of the ship's controls, know where she had gone. For Rachmael, however, it had been psychologically devastating to watch the *Omphalos* blast out into the limitless darkness: Ferry had been right—the *Omphalos* had been the sine quo non of Applebaum Enterprise; without her nothing remained.

But at least this way she might return; or more accurately, he eventually might be taken, by Lies Incorporated, by high-velocity flapple to her, allowed to see, board her, again, to begin his eighteen-year trip. And, the other way—

"Don't dwell on Ferry's offer," Freya said softly. She nodded to the waitress, who placed a solid-stem but chilled wine glass before Rachmael; he automatically, obediently, poured himself a trace of the 2002 Buena Vista white, tasted it; kept himself from taking more; he merely nodded in complement to the wine, tried to make it appear that he was accustomed to such an outrageously, almost divinely penetrating bouquet and flavor. It made absurd everything he had drunk his life long.

"I'm not thinking of it," he said to Freya. Not, he thought, in view of what you have—or are supposed to have—in your purse.

Her large black leather mail-pouch-style purse rested on the table beside her, within reach of his fingers.

"The components," Freya said softly, "are in the purse in a simulated gold round container marked *Eternity of Sexual Potency Fragrance #54*, a routine continental scent; anyone going through my purse would expect to find it. There are twelve components, all super-min, of course. Beneath the inner lid. On India paper, on the reverse of the label, is a wiring diagram. I will rise to my feet in a moment and go to the powder room; after a few seconds—you must sit quietly, Rachmael, because it is about a seventy-thirty possibility that THL agents are monitoring us, either directly as patrons or by instrument—you must sit; then, when I don't return immediately, you fidget, you try to attract Genet's attention, to order some dinner for yourself or at least—and this is vital—obtain the menu."

He nodded, listening intently.

"She will notice you and give you a menu; it is quite stiff and large, since it contains the wine list. You will place it on the table so that it covers my purse."

Rachmael said, "And I accidently knock your purse to the

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floor, and the contents spill out, and in gathering them up I—"

"Are you insane?" Quietly she said, "You cover the purse. There is a strip of titanium within the righthand overleaf of the menu. The container of scent has a titanium-tropic ambulation-circuit; it will within two seconds register the presence of the strip and will rotate itself out of my purse, which I've left open; it will travel across the *underside* of the menu. The strip is at the bottom, where your right hand with complete naturalness will be resting as you hold what has been deliberately made up an awkward, stiff menu. When it touches the titanium strip the container will emit a weak charge, about ten volts; you will feel this galvanization and you will then, with your four fingers, take hold of the container, detach it from the titanium strip to which it has tropically adhered, drop it from the underside of the menu onto your lap. And then, with your *other* hand, you will shift the container from your lap into your pocket." She rose. "I'll be back within six minutes. Goodbye. And good luck."

He watched her go.

AND then, as he sat there, he realized that he had to rise, too; had to act—the job of transferring the deep-sleep components obtained for him from the blackmarket was difficult and delicate, because Theodoric Ferry, ever since Lies Incorporated had taken out his satellite and its crew, its simulacrum of Ferry himself, had kept total surveillance over everything Rachmael had done; the ultimate in technological and personnel resources of Trails of Hoffman Limited had been brought into play, motivated now by Theorodic's personal animus.

What had been a remote and impersonal conflict had become once more, he reflected, that which it had always been for his father: a deeply human, immediate matter. A struggle which, at last, had brought his father's death and the disintegration of the organization.

Thinking this, Rachmael began dutifully to fidget, then rose, began hunting for the girl with the light-emanating, gay music resounding, Swiss nipple.

"A menu, sir?" Genet stood before him, holding out the great, wonderfully-printed and engraved, in fact embossed, menu; he thanked her, accepted it humbly, returned to his table with the pleasant tunes of Johann Strauss in his ears.

The menu, the size of an old-fashioned antique disc record album, easily covered Freya's purse. He sat holding it open, reading the wine list, and espe-

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cially the prices. Good god! It cost a fortune even for a split of good wine, here. And for a fifth of a three-year-old generic white—

All the retail establishments such as the Fox's Lair were exploiting Terra's overpopulation; people who had waited three hours to get in here to eat and drink would pay these prices—by then they had, psychologically, no choice.

A weak electric shock made his right hand quiver; the circular container of miniaturized deep-sleep components had already made physical contact with him and, with his fingers, he pried it, clam-like, loose from its grip, its tropism; he dropped it into his lap, felt its weight.

As directed, he then reached for it with his left hand, to transfer it to his cloak pocket . . .

"Sorry—oops." A busboy, a robot, carrying a loaded, chest-high tray of dishes, had bumped him, making him totter on his chair. People everywhere, those rising, those seating themselves, the robot busboys clearing, the waitresses with their lights and tunes everywhere . . . confused, Rachmael reseated himself, reached for the container on his lap.

It was gone.

Fallen to the floor? In disbelief he peered down, saw his shoes, the table legs, a discarded match folder. No round gold-like container.

They had gotten it. It was they who had sent the "busboy." And now it, too, with its load of dishes, had vanished in the general confusion.

Defeated, he sat vacantly staring. And then, at last, from the split of wine, he poured himself a second drink, lifted the glass as if in toast: a toast to the success, admitted and accepted, of the invisible extensions of THL around him that had, in the crucial instant, intervened, deprived him of what he needed essentially in order to leave the Sol system with the big *Omphalos*.

It did not matter now whether he made contact with Dosker aboard her; lacking the components it was insanity to leave.

Freya returned, seated herself across from him, smiled. "All okay?"

Leadenly, he said, "They stopped us. Dead." For now, anyhow, he thought. But it's not finished yet.

He drank, his heart laboring, the delicate, expensive, delicious, and utterly superfluous wine—the wine of at least temporary utter defeat.

ON the TV screen, Omar Jones, President of New-colonizedland, highest official in residence at the great modular settlement at Whale's Mouth,

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said jovially, "Well, you folks back home, all bunched together there in those little boxes you live in—we greet you, wish you luck." The familiar, round, pleasant face beamed its smile of warmth. "And we're just wonderin', folks, when you all are going to team up with us and join us here at Newcolonizedland. Eh?" He cupped his ear. As if, Rachmael thought, it were a two-way transmission. But this was illusion. This was a video tape sent across in signal-form by way of von Einem's Telpor nexus at Schweinfort, New Whole Germany. By, through, the good offices of the UN's network of Earth satellites, relayed to TV sets throughout Terra.

Aloud, Rachmael said, "Sorry, President Omar Jones, of Newcolonizedland, Whale's Mouth." I'll visit you, he thought, but my own way. Not by a von Einem Telpor operating for five poscreds at one of Trails of Hoffman's retail outlets . . . so it'll be a little while; in fact, he thought, I'd guess you, President Jones, will be dead by the time I arrive.

Although after the defeat at the Fox's Lair—

They, the opposition, had in effect severed him from his source of support, from Lies Incorporated. He had sat across from their rep, pretty, dark-haired Freya Holm, drunk vintage wine with her, chatted, laughed. But when it came time to transfer vital components from Lies Incorporated across a five-inch space to him . . .

The vidphone in the miniscule bedroom-cubby of his conapt said *Pwannnnnnk!* Indicating that someone desired to contact him.

Shutting off the jolly face of President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland, Whale's Mouth, he went to the vidphone, lifted the receiver.

On its gray, undersized screen there formed the features of Matson Glazer-Holliday. "Mr. ben Applebaum," Matson said.

"What can we do?" Rachmael said, feeling the weight of their loss. "In fact those people are probably monitoring this—"

"Oh yes; we register a tap on this vidline." Matson nodded, but he did not seem nonplussed. "We know they're not only monitoring this call but recording it, both aud and vid. However, my message to you is brief, and they're welcome to it. Contact the master circuit of your local public Xerox-spool library."

"And then?" Rachmael asked.

"Do research," Matson Glazer-Holliday said carefully. "Into the original discovery of Whale's Mouth. The first unmanned data-receptors, recorders and transmitters which were traveled from the Sol system, years

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ago, to the Fomalhaut system; in fact, back in the twentieth century."

Rachmael said, "But why—"

"And we'll be in touch," Matson said briskly. "Goodbye. And glad to have—" He eyed Rachmael. "Don't let that little incident at the restaurant get to you. It's routine. I assure you." He mock-saluted, and then the image on the tiny colorless—the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem provided minimal service, and, as a public utility licensed by the UN, got away with it—the image died.

Rachmael, bewildered, hung up the aud receiver.

THE records of the original unmanned monitors which had been dispatched to the Fomalhaut system years ago were public record; what could exist there that would be of value? Nevertheless he dialed the local branch of the New New York Xerox-spool public library.

Send to my apt," he said, "the abstract, the comprehensive material available, on the initial scouting of the Fomalhaut system." By those now old-fashioned constructs which George Hoffman had utilized—by which the habitable planet Whale's Mouth had been discovered.

Presently a robot runner appeared at his door with a variety of spools. Rachmael seated himself at his scanner, inserted the first spool, noting that it was marked *A General Survey of the Fomalhaut Unmanned Inter-system Vehicle Reports, Shorter Version,* by someone named G.S. Purdy.

For two hours he ran the spool. It showed that sun coming nearer and nearer, then the planets, one by one and disappointing, bitterly so, until now number nine bloomed into view; and all at once—

No more barren rocks, unblunted mountains. No airless, germless, hygienic void with methane as gas or crystalized at greater astronomical units from the sun. Suddenly he saw a swaying and undulating, blue-green frieze, and this had caused Dr. von Einem to trot out his Telpor equipment, to set up the direct link between this world and Terra. This plum-ripe landscape had gotten Trails of Hoffman interested commercially—and had written *mene, mene* for Applebaum Enterprise.

The last vid monitor-reading was fifteen years old. Since then direct contact via teleportation gear had made such ancient hardware obsolete. And hence the original unmanned monitors, in orbit around Fomalhaut—

Had what? Been *abandoned,* according to author Purdy. Their batteries turned off by re-

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mote instruct; they still, presumably, circled the sun within the orbit of Whale's Mouth.

They were still there.

And their batteries, having been off all these years, had conserved, not expended, energy. And they were of the advanced liquid-helium III type.

Was *this* what Matson had wanted him to know?

Returning to the reference spool he ran it, ran it, again and again, until he had the datum at last. The most sophisticated vid monitor belonged to Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem. *They* would know if it, called Prince Albert B-y, was still in orbit around Fomalhaut.

He started toward his vidphone, then stopped. After all, it was tapped. So instead he left his conapt, left the huge building entirely, joined a ped-runnel until he spied a public phonebooth.

There, he called the Vidphone Corporation, its central offices in Detroit, open on a twenty-four hour a day basis.

"Give me your archives," he instructed the robot switchboard.

Presently a human, wizened but efficient-looking, gnome-like official in a gray jacket, like a bookkeeper, appeared. "Yeah?"

"I'm inquiring," Rachmael said, "as to the Prince Albert B-y mon-sat put in orb around Fomalhaut seventeen years ago. I'd like you to check as to whether it's still in orb and if it is, how it can be activated so—"

The signal went dead. At the other end the Vidphone Corporation official had hung up. He waited. The Vidphone switchboard did not come onto the wire, nor did the regular, local robot.

I'll be darned, Rachmael thought. Shaken, he left the phonebooth.

He continued on aboard the runnel until at last he reached a second public phonebooth.

Entering he this time dialed Matson Glazer-Holliday's satellite. Presently he had the owner of Lies Incorporated again facing him from the screen.

Carefully, Rachmael said, "Sorry to bother you. But I've been running info spools on the original unmanned monitors of the Fomalhaut system."

"Learn anything?"

"I asked," Rachmael said, "the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem if its Prince Albert B-y—"

"And they said?"

Rachmael said, "They immediately cut the con."

"It," Matson said, "is still up. Still in orb."

"And sending out signals?"

"Not for fifteen years. At hyper-see it takes its signals one week to cross the twenty-four light year gap to the Sol system.

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Rather shorter than it would require for the *Omphalos* to reach the Fomalhaut system."

"Is there any way to once more activate the satellite?"

"Vidphone Corp could contact it direct, through a Telpor," Matson said. "If they wanted to."

"Do they?"

After a pause Matson said, "Did they cut you off just now?"

Pondering, Rachmael said, "Can someone else give the impulse to the satellite?"

"No. Only the Vidphone Corp knows the sequence which would cause it to respond."

"Is this what you wanted me to find out?" Rachmael asked.

Smiling, Matson Glazer-Holliday said, "Goodbye, Mr. ben Applebaum. And good luck, as you continue your research." He then hung up, and once more Rachmael faced a dead screen.

AT his villa, Matson turned away from the vidset to Freya Holm, who perched on the couch, legs tucked under her, wearing a high-fashion transparent spidersilk blue blouse and meter-reader's pants. "He found it," Matson said. "Right away. That about the P.A. B-y sat." Pacing, Matson scowled. "All right." He had decided. "Our rep, under the cover-name Bergen Phillips, will be sent to Whale's Mouth six hours from now. By way of the THL outlet at Paris. As soon as he's at Whale's Mouth he'll transmit to us, through the Telpor, an encoded document describing the true conditions." But probably THL's people would have nabbed "Bergen Phillips" by then, and, through techniques well-known in the trade, have learned all that the Lies Incorporated veteran knew; they would then send a faked encoded message, assuring Matson that all was well—and he would never know, on receipt of such a message, whether it truly emanated from "Bergen Phillips" or from THL. However—

Freya saw it, too. "Have this rep, once he's across, give the activating sequence to the P.A. B-y sat. So it'll start transmitting data to the Sol system direct, once again."

"*If*," Matson said. "*If* it still will function after fifteen years. And *if* the Vidphone Corp does not countermand the instruct the moment data starts to flow in." However, he could tap the Vidphone Corp's lines and pick up even that initial meager data. What he might obtain before the flow ceased coming in might be a graphic pan-shot of Whale's Mouth—and then so what if the sat was shut off once more.

As naturally it would be, since THL controlled the Vidphone Corp.

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"Just one good vid shot," Matson said. "And we'll know."

"Know what?" She reached to set down her drink glass on the nearby antique genuine glass-topped coffee table.

Matson said, "I'll tell you that, dear, when I see the shot." He went to the comboard, sent out the already implemented request for the field rep who was to cross over to Whale's Mouth to be brought to his satellite. These instructs had to be given orally and *not* over lines; to line it was to howl it broadcast.

In fact perhaps he had already communicated too much to Rachmael. But—in such a business one took risks. And he could assume that Rachmael's callback had emanated from a public booth; the man, although an amateur, was at least cautious. And these days such caution was not paranoid; it was practical.

ON the TV screen in 3-D color with olfactory track the round, jovial features of President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland said, "You folks there on good old overcrowded Terra —" And, behind him, faded in a scene of miles of open veldt-like park, "—you amaze us. We hear you're going to send a ship here, by hyper-see, and it'll arrive in . . . let's see." He pretended to be contemplating.

Before the set (not quite paid for) Jack McElhatten, a hard-working, easy-going, good-natured guy, said to his wife, "Chrissakes, look at that open land." It reminded him of his sweet, fragile childhood, of, years ago and now gone, the Oregon Trail part of Wyoming west of Cheyenne. And the desire, the yearning, grew in him. "We have to emigrate," he said to Ruth, then. "We owe it to our kids. They can grow up as—"

"Shh," Ruth said.

On the screen President Omar Jones of Newcolonizedland said, "In just about eighteen years, folks, that ship will arrive this way and park down. So here's what we've done; we've set aside November 24, 2032, as Flying Dutchman Day. The day that ship reaches us." He chuckled. "I'll be, um, ninety-four and, sorry to say, probably not here to participate in Flying Dutchman Day. But maybe posterity, including some of you young folks—"

"You hear that?" McElhatten said to his wife, incredulous. "Some nut is going to go the old way. Eighteen years in 'tween space! When all you have to do—"

"BE QUIET," Ruth said, furiously, trying to listen.

"—be here to greet this Mr. Applebaum," President Omar Jones intoned in clowning sol-

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emnity. "Banners, vox-pop streamers . . . we should have a population of between, well, say, one billion, then, but still plenty of land. We can take up to *two* billion, you know, and still leave plenty of room. So come on and join us; cross over and be here to celebrate Flying Dutchman Day, folks." He waved, and, it seemed to Jack McElhatten, this man at Whale's Mouth was waving directly to him. And, within him, the yearning grew.

The frontier, he thought. Their neighbors in the tiny cramped conapt with which they shared a bathroom . . . or had, up until last month, at which point the Pattersons had emigrated to Whale's Mouth. The vid-sig letters from Jerome Patterson; god, they had raved about conditions across on the other side. If anything, the info spots—ads, to be exact—had understated the beauty of the real-sit over there. The beauty—and the opportunity.

"We need *men*," President Omar Jones was declaring. "Good strong men who can do any kind of work. Are you that man? Able, willing, with get-up-and-go, over eighteen years of age? Willing to start a new life, using your mind and your hands, the skills God gave you? Think about it. What are you doing with those hands, those skills, *right now*?"

Doing quality-control on an autofac line, McElhatten thought to himself bitterly; a job which a pigeon could do better; fact was, a pigeon did do so, to check *his* work.

"Can you imagine," he said to his wife, "holding down a job where a pigeon has a better eye than you for mis-tolerances?" And that was exactly his situation; he ejected parts which were not properly aligned, and, when he missed, the pigeon noted the miss, the defective part allowed to pass: it picked out the misaligned part, pecked a reject-button which kicked the part from the moving belt. And, as they quit and emigrated, the quality control men at Krino Associates were, one by one, replaced by pigeons.

He stayed on now, really, only because the union to which he belonged was strong enough to insist that his seniority made it mandatory for Krino to keep him on. But once he quit, once he left—

"Then," he said to Ruth, "the pigeon moves in. Okay, let it; we're going across to Whale's Mouth, and from then on I won't be competing with birds." Competing, he thought, and losing. Offering my employers the poorer showing. "And Krino will be glad," he said, with misery.

"I just wish," Ruth said, "that you had a *particular* job lined up

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over there at Newcolonizedland. I mean, they talk about 'all the jobs,' but you can't take 'all the jobs.' What one job are you—" She hesitated. "Skilled for?" After all, he had worked for Krino Associates for ten years.

"I'm going to farm."

She stared at him.

"They'll *give* us twenty acres. We'll buy sheep here, those black-faced ones. Suffolk. Take six across, five ewes and a ram, put up fences, build ourselves a house out of prefab sections—" He knew he could do it. Others had, as they had described—not in impersonal ads—but in letters vid-signalled back and then transcribed by the Vidphone Corporation and posted on the bulletin board of the conapt building.

"But if we don't like it," Ruth murmured apprehensively, "we won't be able to come back; I mean, that seems so strange. Those teleportation machines . . . working one way only."

"The extra-galactic nebulae," he said patiently. "The recession of matter outward; the universe is exploding, growing; the Telpor relates your molecules as energy configurations in this outflow—"

"I don't understand," Ruth said. "But I do know this," she said, and, from her purse, brought a leaflet.

Studying the leaflet, McElhatten scowled. "Cranks. This is hate literature, Ruth. Don't accept it." He began to crumple it up.

"They don't call themselves by a hating name. 'Friends of a United People.' They're a small group of worried, dedicated people, opposed to—"

"I know what they're opposed to," McElhatten said. Several of them worked at Krino Associates. "They say we Terrans should stay within the Sol system. Stick together. Listen." He crumpled up the leaflet. "The history of man has been one vast migration. This to Whale's Mouth; it's the greatest yet—twenty-four light years! We ought to be proud." But naturally there'd be a few idiots and cranks opposing history.

YES, it was history and he wanted to be part of it. First it had been New England, then Australia, Alaska, and then the try—and failure—on Luna, then on Mars and Venus, and now—success. At last. And if he waited too long he would be too old and there would be too many expatriates so free land would no longer be available; the government at Newcolonizedland might withdraw its land offer any time, because after all, every day people streamed over. The Telpor offices were swamped.

"You want me to go?" he

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asked Ruth. "Go first—and send a message back, once I have the land and am ready to begin building? And then you and the kids can come?"

Nervously, she said, "I hate to be parted from you."

"Make up your mind."

"I guess," she said, "we should go together. If we go at all. But these—letters. They're just impulses onto energy lines."

"Like telephone or vidphone or telegraph or TV messages. Has been for one hundred years."

"If only *real letters* came back."

"You have," he said, derisively, "a superstitious fear."

"Maybe so," Ruth admitted. But it was a real fear nonetheless. A deep and abiding fear of a one-way trip from which they could never return, except, she thought, eighteen years from now, when that ship reaches the Fomalhaut system.

She picked up the evening 'pape, examined the article, jeering in tone, about this ship, the *Omphalos*. Capable of transporting five hundred, but this time carrying one sole man: the ship's owner. And, the article said, he was fleeing to escape his creditors; that was his motive.

But, she thought, *he* can come back from Whale's Mouth.

She envied—without understanding why—that man. Rachmael ben Applebaum, the 'pape said. If we could cross over now with you, she thought, if we asked—

Her husband said quietly, "If you won't go, Ruth, *I'm going alone.* I'm not going to sit there day after day at that quality-control station, feeling that pigeon breathing down the back of my neck."

She sighed. And wandered into the common kitchen which they shared with their righthand neighbors, the Shorts, to see if

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there was anything left of their monthly ration of what the bill of lading called cof-bz. Synthetic coffee beans.

There was not. So, instead, she morosely fixed herself a cup of synthetic tea. Meanwhile, the Shorts—who were noisy—came and went, in and out of the kitchen. And, in her living room, her husband sat before the TV set, an enraptured child, listening to, following with devout and absorbed full attention the nightly report from Whale's Mouth. Watching the new, the next, world.

I guess, she thought, he's right.

But something deep and instinctive within her still objected. And she wondered queerly why. And she thought, then, once more of Rachmael ben Applebaum, who, the 'pape said, was attempting the eighteen-year-trip *without* deep-sleep equipment; he had tried and failed to obtain it, the 'pape said gleefully; the guy was so marginal an operator, such a fly-by-nighter, that he had no credit, pos or otherwise. The poor man, she thought. Conscious and alone for eighteen whole years; couldn't the company that makes those deep-sleep units *donate* the equipment he needs?

The TV set in the living room declared, "Remember, folks, it's Old Mother Hubbard there on Terra, and the Old Woman who lived in a shoe; you've got so many children, folks, and just what do you plan to do?"

Emigrate, Ruth decided, without enthusiasm. Apparently.

And—soon.

V

AGAINST Rachmael ben Applebaum's tiny flapple the great hull of his one asset of economic value—and that attached through the courts—bumped in the darkness, and at once automatic mechanisms came into operation. A hatch whined open; inner locks shut and then retired as air passed into vacuum and replaced it, and, on his console, a green light lit. A good one.

He could safely pass from his meager rented flapple into the Omphalos, as it hung in powerless orbit around Mars at .003 astronomical units.

Directly he had crossed through the lock-series—without use of a pressure suit or oxygen gear—Al Dosker said to him, eying him and with laser pistol in hand, "I thought it might be a simulacrum, supplied by THL. But the EEG and EKG machines say you're not." He held out his hand; he and Rachmael shook. "So you're making the trip anyhow, without the deep-sleep components. And you think, after eighteen years, you'll be sane? I

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wouldn't be." His dark, sharp-cut face was filled with compassion. "Can't you induce some fray to come along? One other person, and what a difference, especially if she's—"

"And quarrel," Rachmael said, "and wind up with one corpse. I'm taking an enormous edu-tape library; by the time I reach Fomalhaut I'll be speaking Attic Greek, Latin, Russian, Italian—I'll be reading alchemical texts from the Middle Ages and Chinese classics in the original from the sixth century." He smiled, but it was an empty, frozen smile; he was not fooling Dosker, who knew what it was like to try an inter-system run without deep-sleep. Because Dosker had made the three-year-trip to Proxima. And, on the journey back, had insisted, from his experience, on deep-sleep.

"What gets me," Rachmael said, "is that THL has gotten to the blackmarket. That they're even able to dry up illegal supplies of minned parts." But—the chance had been missed in the restaurant; the components had been within reach, five thousand poscreds' worth. And—that was that.

"You know," Dosker said slowly, "that one of Lies Incorporated's experienced field reps is crossing, using a regular Telpor terminal, like the average fella. So we may be contacting the *Omphalos* within the next week; you may be able to turn back; we may save you the eighteen years going, and, or have you forgotten, the eighteen years returning?"

"I'm not sure," Rachmael said, "if I make it I'll come back." He was not fooling himself; after the trip to Fomalhaut he might be physically unable to start back—whatever conditions obtained at Whale's Mouth he might stay there because he *had* to. The body had its limits. So did the mind.

Anyhow they now had more to go on. Not only the failure of the old time capsule ever to reach the Sol system—and conveniently forgotten by the media—but the Vidphone Corporation of Wes-Dem's absolute refusal, under direct, legal request by Matson Glazer-Holliday, to reactivate its Prince Albert B-y satellite orbiting Fomalhaut. This one fact alone, Rachmael reflected, should have frightened the rational citizen. But—

The people did not know. The media had not reported it.

Matson, however, had leaked the info to the small, militant, anti-emigration org, the Friends of a United People. Mostly they were old-fashioned, elderly and fearful, whose distrust of emigration by means of Telpor was based on neurotic reasons. But—they did print pamphlets. And

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Vidphone Corp's refusal had duly been noted immediately in one of their Terra-wide broadsheets.

But how many persons had seen it—that Rachmael did not know. He had the intuition, however, that very few people had. And—emigration continued.

As Matson said, the footprints leading into the predator's lair continued to increase in number. And still none led out.

Dosker said, "All right, I am now officially, formally surrendering the *Omphalos* back to you. She appears to check out through every system, so you should have nothing to fear." His dark eyes glinted. "I tell you what, ben Applebaum. During your eighteen years of null-deep-sleep you can amuse yourself as I've been, during the last week." He reached to a table, picked up a leather-backed book. "You can," he said quietly, "keep a diary."

"Of what?"

"Of a mind," Dosker said, "deteriorating. It'll be of psychiatric interest." Now he did not seem to be joking."

"So even you," Rachmael said, "consider me—"

"Without deep-sleep equipment to drop your metabolism you're making a terrible mistake to go. So maybe the diary won't be a transcript of human deterioration; maybe that's already taken place."

Wordlessly, Rachmael watched the dark, lithe man step through the lock, disappear, out of the *Omphalos* and into the tiny rented flapple.

The lock clanged shut. A red light flicked on above it and he was alone, here in this, his giant passenger liner, as he would be for eighteen years and maybe, he thought, maybe Dosker is right.

But still he intended to make the trip.

AT three o'clock a.m. Matson Glazer-Holliday was awakened by one of his staff of automatic villa servants. "Your lord, a message from a Mr. Bergen Phillips. From New-colonized-land. Just received. And you asked—"

"Yes." Matson sat up, spilling the covers from Freya, who slept on; he grabbed his robe, slippers. "Let's have it."

The message, typed out by routine printers of the Vidphone Corp, read:

BOUGHT MY FIRST ORANGE TREE. LOOKS LIKE A BIG CROP. COME ON JOIN MOLLY AND ME.

Now Freya stirred, sat up; her spidersilk nightgown, one strap of it, slipped from her bare, pale shoulder. "What is it?" she murmured.

"The first encoded note from B.P.," Matson said; he absently tap-tapped the folded message

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against his knee, pondering.

She sat up fully, reached for her pack of Bering cigarillos. "What does he report, Mat?"

Matson said, "The message is version six."

"That—things are exactly as depicted." She was wide-awake, now; she sat lighting her cigarillo, watching him intently.

"Yes. But— THL psychologists, waiting on the far side, could have nabbed the field rep. 'Washed his brain, gotten everything and then sent this; so it meant nothing. Only a transmission of one of the odd-numbered codes—indicating in various degrees that conditions at Whale's Mouth were not as depicted—would have been worth anything. Because of course THL psychologists would have no motive to fake *those*.

"So," Freya said, "you know nothing."

"But maybe he can activate the Prince Albert B-y sat." One week; it would not be long, and the *Omphalos* could easily be contacted by then. And, since its solo pilot did not lie in deep-sleep, he could be informed.

However, if after a week—

"If no data come from the sat," Matson said thoughtfully, "it still proves nothing. Because then Bergen will transmit message *n*, meaning that the sat has proved inoperative. *They* will do all that, too, if they have him. So still nothing!" He paced about the bedroom, then took the burning cigarillo from the girl in the rumpled bed, inhaled from it violently, until it heated up and scorched his fingers. "I," he said, "will not live out eighteen years." I will never live to know the truth about Whale's Mouth, he realized. That time-period; it was just too long to wait.

"You'll be seventy-nine," Freya said practically. "So you'll still be alive. But a *jerry* with artiforgs for natural organs."

"But— I'm just not that patient, Matson realized. A newborn baby grows virtually to adulthood in that time!

Freya retrieved the cigarillo, winced at its temperature. "Well, possibly you can send over—"

"I'm going over," Matson said.

Staring at him, after a moment she said, "Oh god. God."

"I won't go alone. I'll have a 'family.' At every outlet of Trails of Hoffman a Lies Incorporated commando team—" He possessed two thousand of them, many veterans of the war; they would pass over at the same moment as he, would link up at Whale's Mouth. And, in their "personal" gear, they would convey enough detection, relay, recording and monitoring equipment to reestablish the private police agency. "So you're in charge here on Terra," he told Freya. "Until I get back." Which would be

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thirty-two years from now, he thought acidly. When I'm ninety-seven years old . . . no, that's right: we can obtain deep-sleep mechanisms at Whale's Mouth because I remember them taking it across; that's one reason why it's so short of supply, here. Originally it was thought that if colonization didn't work they could vacate—*roanoke*, they called it—they could roanoke back to the Sol system in deep-sleep by ship . . . from giant liners manufactured at Whale's Mouth from prefab sections passed across by r. von Einem's Telpor teleportation gates.

"A coup," Freya said, then. "In fact—a *coup d'etat.*"

Startled, he said, "What? God no; I never—"

"If you take two thousand top reps," Freya said, "Lies Incorporated won't exist here; it'll be a shade. But over there—it'll be formidable. And the UN has no army at Whale's Mouth, Matson. You're aware of that, at least on an unconscious level. Who could oppose you? Let's see. The President of Newcolonizedland, Omar Jones, is up for reelection in two years you'd possibly want to wait—"

"At the first call from Whale's Mouth," Matson said harshly, "Omar Jones could have UN troops trotting through every Telpor instrument in the world. And their tactical weapons with them, everything up to cephalotropic missiles." And he hated—and feared—those.

"*If* a call came from Whale's Mouth. But once you're on the other side, you could handle that. *You could be sure no such emergency announcement was sent out.* Isn't that what we've been discussing all this time? Isn't this really why you bought Rachmael's idea—your knowledge that all communication from the other side can be—*managed?*" She waited, smoking, watching him with a feminine vigil of intensity and acuity.

PRESENTLY he said tightly, "Yes. We could do that. They may have THL psychologists armed and ready for individuals. But not for two thousand trained police. We'd have control in half an hour—probably. Unless, unknown to us, Horst Bertold has been sending troops across." And, he pondered, why should he? All they face—up to now—is bewildered citizens, expatriates who want jobs, homes, new roots . . . in a world they can't leave.

"And remember this, too," Freya said. She lifted the strap of her nightgown once more, then, covering her faintly freckled shoulder. "The receiving portion of the teleportation rig has to be spacially installed; every one of those over there had to be sent originally by inter-stellar

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hyper-see ship, and that took years. So you can stop the UN and Bertold just by rendering the receiving stations of the Telpors inoperative—*if they suspect.*"

"And *if* I can move quickly enough."

"But you," she said calmly, "can. Taking your best men, with their equipment . . . unless—" She paused, licked her lip, as if puzzling out a purely academic problem.

Maddened, he said, "Unless what, goddam it?"

"They may identify your reps as they cross. And you. They may be ready. I can see it now." She laughed merrily. "You pay your poscreds, smile at the nice THL bald-headed, gargoyle-like New Whole Germany technicians who run those Telpors, you stand there while they subject your body to the field of the equipment . . . keep standing there innocently, fade away, reappear twenty-four light years away at Whale's Mouth . . . and are lasered dead before you're even fully formed. It takes fifteen minutes. For fifteen minutes, Mat, you would be helpless, half materialized both here and there. And all your field reps. And all their gear."

He glared at her.

"Thus," she said, "goes *hubris.*"

"What's that?"

"The Greek word for 'pride.' For trying to rise above the station the gods have allocated you. Maybe the gods don't want you to seize control of Whale's Mouth, Matty darling. Maybe the gods don't want you to overreach yourself."

"Hell," he said, "as long as I have to go across anyhow—"

"Sure; then why *not* take control? Push jovial, insipid Omar Jones aside? After all . . ." She stubbed out her cigarillo. "You'd be doomed to stay there anyhow; why live the ordinary life with the ordinary *hoi polloi?* Here, you're strong . . . but Horst Bertold and the UN, with Trails of Hoffman as their economic support, *are stronger.* Over there—" She shrugged, as if made weary by human aspirations—or human vanity. Over there it was simply a different situation.

NO one, he realized, could compete if he managed to move, in one sudden swoop, his entire entourage and weaponry across . . . using, ironically, von Einem's own official retail stations themselves. He grinned at that; it amused him to think that THL would personally see to it that he and his veteran reps reached Newcolonizedland.

"And then in 2032," Freya said, "when Rachmael ben Applebaum, probably an unwashed, bearded, mumbling hebephrenic

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schizophrenic by then, shows up in his great and good ship the *Omphalos*, he'll discover it's a hell, there, exactly as he anticipated . . . but it'll be *you* who'll be running it. And I'll bet *that* will surprise him more than a little."

Nettled, he said, "I can't think about it any more. I'm going back to sleep." He removed his robe and slippers, got wearily into the bed, aware of his years; he felt old. Wasn't he too decrepit for something like this? Not getting into bed; lord, he wasn't too old to clamber in beside Freya Holm, not yet, anyhow. But too old for what Freya had proposed —what she had correctly, possibly even telepathically, ascertained from his unconscious mind. Yes, it was actually true.

He had, from Rachmael's initial vidphone call, at the back levels of his cognition-processes, pondered this. From the very beginning.

And *this* was his reason for assisting—or rather trying to assist—the morose, creditor-balloon-hounded Rachmael ben Applebaum.

He thought, according to published info there is a home army, so-called, at Whale's Mouth, of three hundred volunteer citizens. For use as a sort of national guard in case of a riot. Three hundred! And none of them professionals, with experience. It was a pastoral land, the ads explained. A G. of E. lacking a snake; since there was a superabundance of everything for everyone, what was an army needed for? What have-not existed to envy what have? And what reason to try, by force, to seize his holdings?

I'll tell you, Matson Glazer-Holliday thought. The have-nots are here on this side. Myself and those who work for me; we're gradually, over the years, being ground down and overpowered by the true titans, by the UN and THL And—

The haves are across twenty-four light years in the Fomalhaut system, at its ninth planet.

Mr. ben Applebaum, he thought to himself as he lay supine, drew, from reflex, Freya Holm against him, you will have quite a surprise when you get to Whale's Mouth.

It was a pity that he himself—and he intuited this with certitude—would not be alive at that date.

As to *why* not, however, his near-Psionic intuition told him nothing.

Beside him Freya moaned in her half-sleep, settled close to him, relaxed.

He, however, lay awake, staring into the nothingness. Deep in a new, hard thought. The like of which he had never experienced before.

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VI

THE monitoring and recording-transmitting satellite, Prince Albert B-y, creaked out its initial signal, a transcript of the first video telescopic records which it had taken of the surface beneath it in over a decade. Portions of the long-inert network of minned parts failed; backup systems, however, took over, and some of these failed, too. But the signal, directed toward the Sol system twenty-four light years away, was sent out.

And, on the surface of Fomalhaut IX, an eye winked. And from it a ground-to-air missile rose and in a period so slight that only the finest measuring-devices could have detected a lapse-period at all, arrived at its target, the groaning carrot-shaped monitoring satellite which had, inoperative, silently existed—and hence harmlessly. Up to now.

The warhead of the missile detonated. And the Prince Albert B-y ceased to exist, soundlessly, because at its altitude there was no atmosphere to transmit the event in the dimension of noise.

And, at the same time on the surface below, a powerful transmitter accepted a tape run at enormous velocity; the signal, amplified by a row of cold, superbly-built surge-gates, reached transmission level and was released; oddly, its frequency coincided with that of the signal just emitted by the now nonexistent satellite.

What would radiate from the two separate transmitters would blend in a cacaphony of meaningless garble. Satisfied, the technicians operating the ground transmitter switched to more customary channels—and tasks.

The deliberately deranged combined signal sped across space toward the Sol system, beamed, in its mad confusion, at a planet which, when it received this, would possess nothing but a catfight of noise.

And the satellite, reduced to its molecular level by the warhead, would emit no more signals; its life was over.

The event, the first transmission by the satellite up unto the final scramble by the far more powerful surface transmitter, had consumed five minutes, including the flight—and demolition—of the missile: the missile and its priceless, elaborate, never-to-be-duplicated target.

—A target which, certain circles had long ago agreed in formal session, could be readily sacrificed, were the need to arise.

That need had arisen.

And the satellite was duly gone.

At the site of the missile-launching a helmeted soldier lei-

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surely fitted a second g.-to-a. missile into the barn, attached both its anode and cathode terminals, made sure that the activating board was relocked—by the same key through which he had obtained official entry—and then he, too, returned to his customary chores.

Time lapse: perhaps six minutes in all.

And the planet, Fomalhaut IX, revolved on.

DEEP in thought as she sat in the comfortable leather, padded seat of the luxury taxi flapple, Freya Holm was startled by the sudden mechanical voice of the vehicle's articulation-circuit. "Sir or madam, I request your pardon, but a deterioration of my meta-battery forces me without choice to land for a quick-charge without delay. Please give me oral permission as an acknowledgement of your willingness otherwise we will glide to destruct."

Looking down she saw the high-rise spires of New New York, the ring of city outside the inner, older kremlin of New York itself. Late for work, she said to herself, damn it. But—the flapple was correct; if its metabattery, its sole power supply, were failing, to get out of the sky and on the surface at a repair station was mandatory; a long powerless glide would mean death in the form of collision with one of the tall commercial buildings below. "Yes," she agreed, resignedly, and groaned. And today was the day.

"Thank you, sir or madam." With sputtering power the flapple spiraled down until at last, under adequate control, it coasted to a rather rough but at least not dangerous halt at one of New New York's infinite flapple service stations.

A moment later uniformed service station men swarmed over the parked flapple, searching for—as one explained courteously to her—for the short which had depleted the meta-battery, good normally, the attendant told her cheerfully, for twenty years.

Opening the flapple door the attendant said, "May I check under the passenger's console, please? The wiring there; those circuits take a lot of hard use—the insulation may be rubbed off." He, a Negro, seemed to her pleasant and alert and without hesitation she moved to the far side of the cab.

The Negro attendant slid in, closed, then, the flapple door. "Moon and cow," he said, the current—and highly temporary—ident-code phrase of members of the police organization Lies Incorporated.

Taken by surprise Freya murmured, "Jack Horner. Who are you? I never ran into you be-

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fore." He did not look like a field rep to her.

"A 'tween space pilot. I'm Al Dosker; I know you—you're Freya Holm." He was not smiling now; he was quiet, serious, and, as he sat beside her, perfunctorily running his fingers over the wiring of the passenger's control console he said, half chantingly, "I have no time, Freya, for small talk; I have five minutes at the most; I know where the short is because I sent this particular flapple taxi to pick you up. See?"

"I see," she said, and, within her mouth, bit on a false tooth; the tooth split and she tasted the bitter outer-layer of a plastic pill: a container of Prussic acid, enough to kill her if this man proved to be from their antagonists. And, at her wrist, she wound her watch—actually winding a low-velocity homeostatic cyanide-tipped dart which she would control by the "watch" controls; it could either take out this man or, if others showed up, herself, in case of a failure of the oral poison. In any case she had now done all she could; she sat back rigid, waiting.

"You," the Negro said, "are Matson's mistress; you have access to him at any time; this I know—this is why I've approached you. Tonight, at six p.m. New New York time, Matson Glazer-Holliday will arrive at an outlet of Trails of Hoffman; carrying two heavy suitcases he will request permission to emigrate. He will pay his six poscreds, or seven, if his baggage is overweight, and then be teleported to Whale's Mouth. And at the same time, at every Telpor outlet throughout Terra, a total aggregate of roughly two thousand of his toughest veteran field reps will do the same."

She said nothing; she stared straight ahead. Within her purse an aud recorder captured all this, but heaven only knew for what.

The Negro said, "On the far side he, by deploying his veterans and the wep-equipment which they will assemble from components carried in their suitcases as 'personal articles,' will attempt a coup. Will halt emigration, make at once inoperative the Telpors, toss President Omar Jones—"

"So?" she said. "If I know this, why tell me?"

"Because," Dosker said, "I am going to Horst Bertold two hours before six. I believe that is usually considered four o'clock." His voice was icy, harsh. "I am an employee of Lies Incorporated but I did not join the organization to participate in a power-play like this. On Terra, Matson G.-H. stands about where he ought to be: third in the pecking order. On Whale's Mouth—"

"And you want me," Freya

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said, "to do exactly what between now and four o'clock? Seven hours."

"Inform Matson that when he and the two thousand LI field reps arrive at the retail outlets of THL they will not be teleported but will be arrested and undoubtedly painlessly murdered. In the German manner."

"*This*," she said, "is what you want? Matson dead and them, those—" She gestured, gripping, clawing the air. "Bertold and Ferry and von Einem to run the corporate Terran-Whale's Mouth political-economic entity with no one to—"

"I don't want him to try."

"Listen," Freya said bitingly. "The coup that Matson expects to carry out at Whale's Mouth is based on his assumption that a home army of three hundred ignorant volunteers exists over there. I don't think you have to worry; the problem is that Mat actually *believes* the lies he sees on TV; he's actually incredibly primitive and naive. Do *you* think it's a Promised Land over there, with a tiny volunteer army, waiting for someone to come along with *real* force, aided by modern wep-technology, such as Mat possesses, to harvest for the asking? If this were so, do you honestly believe Bertold and Ferry *would not have done it already?*"

Dosker, disconcerted, eyed her hesitantly.

"I think," she said, "that Mat is making a mistake. Not because it's immoral but because he's going to discover that, once he's over there, he and his two thousand veterans, he'll be facing—" She broke off. "I don't know. But he won't succeed in any *coup d'etat*. Whoever runs Newcolonizedland will handle Mat; that's what terrifies me. Sure, I'd like him to stop; I'd be glad to tell him that one of his top employees who knows all the inside details about the coup is going to, at four p.m., tip off the authorities. I'll do everything in my power, Dosker, to get him to abandon the idea, to face the fact that he's wandering idiotically into a terminal trap. My reasons and yours may not—"

"What do you think," Dosker said, "is over there, Freya?"

"Death."

"For—everybody?" He stared at her. "Forty million? Why?"

"The days," she said, "of Gilbert and Sullivan and Jerome Kern are over. We're on a planet of seven billion. Whale's Mouth could do the job, but slowly, and there's a more efficient way, and every one of those in key posts in the UN, put in by Herr Horst Bertold, knows that way."

"No," Dosker said, his face an ugly, putty-colored gray. "That went out in 1945."

"Are you sure? Would *you* want to emigrate?"

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He was silent. And then, stunning her, he said, "Yes."

"What? Why?"

Dosker said, "I will emigrate. Tonight at six, New New York time. With laser pistol in my left hand, and I'll kick them in the groin; I want to get at them, if that's what they're doing; I can't wait."

"You won't be able to do a thing. As soon as you emerge—"

"With my bare hands. I'll get *one* of them. Any one will do."

"Start here. Start with Horst Bertold."

He stared at her, then.

"We have the wep-techs," Freya said, and then ceased speaking as the flapple door was opened by another—cheerful—attendant.

"Found the short, Al?" he asked.

"Yes," Al Dosker said. He fooled, fumbled, under the dashboard, his face concealed. "Should be okay, now. Recharge the meta-bat, stick it back in, and she can take off."

THE other attendant, satisfied, departed. Freya and Al Dosker were alone once more, briefly, with the flapple door hanging open.

"You—may be wrong," Dosker said.

Freya said, "It's got to be something like that. It can't be three hundred assorted-shape volunteer army privates, because Ferry and Bertold or at least *one* of them would have moved in, and that's the one fact we know: *we know what they're like.* There just cannot, Dosker, be a power vacuum at Whale's Mouth."

"All ready to go, miss," one of the other attendants called.

The flapple's articulation-circuit asserted, "I feel a million times better; I'm now prepared to depart for your original destination, sir or madam, as soon as the superfluous individual has disemflappled."

Dosker, trembling, said, "I—don't know what to do."

"Don't go to Ferry or Bertold. Begin at that."

He nodded. Evidently she had reached him; that part was over.

"Mat will need all the help he can get," she said, "from six o'clock on. From the moment his first field rep hits Whale's Mouth. Dosker, why don't you go? Even if you're a pilot, not a rep. Maybe you can help him."

The flapple started its motor up irritably. "Please, sir or madam, if you will request—"

"Are you teleporting?" Dosker asked her. "With them?"

Freya said, "I'm scheduled to cross at five. To rent living quarters for Mat and me. I'll be—remember this so you can find us—Mrs. Silvia Trent. And Mat will be Stuart Trent. Okay?"

"Okay," Dosker mumbled,

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backed out, shut the flapple door.

The flapple began to ascend, at once.

And she relaxed. And spat out the capsule of Prussic acid, dropped it into the disposal chute of the flapple, then reset her "watch."

What she had said to Dosker, god knew, was the truth. She knew it—knew it and could do nothing to dissuade Matson. On the far side professionals would be in wait, and even if they didn't anticipate the coup, even if there had been no leak and they saw no connection between the two thousand male individuals scattered all over the world, applying at every Telpor outlet on Terra . . . even so, she knew, they would be able to handle Mat. He was just not that big and they *could* handle him.

But *he* did not believe it. Because Mat saw the possibility of power; it was a gaff that had hooked deep in his side and the wound spilled with the blood of yearning. Suppose it was true; suppose only a three-hundred-man army existed. *Suppose.* The hope and possibility enflamed him.

And babies, she thought, as the flapple carried her toward the New New York offices of Lies Incorporated, are discovered under cabbages.

Sure, Mat; you keep on believing.

VII

TO the pleasant, rather overextensively-bosomed young female receptionist Matson Glazer-Holliday said, "My name is Stuart Trent. My wife was teleported earlier today, so I'm anxious to slip in under the wire; I know you're about to close your office."

She glanced searchingly at him, at this bald-headed man with his prominent ridge-bones above his dark, almost pain-haunted eyes. "You're certain, Mr. Trent, that you desire to—"

"My wife," he repeated harshly. "She's already over—she left at five." He added, "I have two suitcases. A leady is bringing them." And, into the office of Trails of Hoffman, strode the robot-like machine, bearing the two genuine cow-hide bulging suitcases.

The consummately nubile receptionist said, "Please fill out these forms, Mr. Trent. I'll make certain that the Telpor techs are ready to receive one more, because, as you say, we are about to close." The entrance-gate, in fact, was now locked.

He made out the forms, feeling only a coldness, an empty, mindless—fear. Lord, it really was fear! He actually, at this late moment, when Freya had already been teleported across to Whale's Mouth, felt his autonomic nervous system secrete its hormones

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of cringing panic; he wanted to back out.

However, he managed to fill out the forms anyhow. Because, higher than the autonomic nervous system, was the frontal lobe's awareness that the moment Freya crossed over, *it was decided.*

In fact, that was his reason for sending her in advance; he knew his own irresolution. He had made her the cat's paw of that irresolution; by having her go he forced himself to complete this. And, he thought, for the best; we must find some way, in life, to overcome ourselves . . . we're our own worst enemies.

"Your shots, Mr. Trent." A THL nurse stood by with needles. "Will you please remove your outer garments?" The nurse pointed to a small and hygienic back chamber; he entered, began removing his clothing.

Presently he had received his shots; his arms ached and he wondered dully if *they* had done it already. Had this been something fatal, administered over the cover of prophylactic shots?

Two elderly German technicians, both as bald as doorknobs —as himself—all at once manifested themselves, wearing the goggles of Telpor operators; the field itself, if viewed too long, caused permanent destruction of the retina. "Mein Herr," the first technician said briskly, "kindly, sir, remove the balance of your garb. *Sie sollen ganz unbedeckt sein.* We wish not material, no sort, to impede the *Starkheit* of the field. All objects, including your parcels, will follow you within minutes." Matson finished undressing, and, terrified, followed them down a tiled hall to what suddenly loomed as a mammoth chamber, almost barren; he saw in it no elaborate Dr. Frankenstein hodgepodge of retorts and bubbling caldrons, only the twin perpendicular poles, like the concrete walls of a good tennis court, covered with circular cup-like terminals; between the poles he would stand, a mute ox, and the surge of the field would pass from pole to pole, engulfing him. And he would either die—if they knew who he was—or if not, then he would be gone from Terra for the balance of his life, or at least thirty-six years which for him was the same.

Lord god, he thought. I hope Freya got by all right. Anyhow the short encoded message signifying everything all right had arrived from her.

"Mr. Trent," one of the technicians said, fitting his goggles in place, "*bitte;* please look down so that your eyes do not perceive the field-emanations; *Sie versteh'n* the retinal hazard."

"Okay," he said, nodding, and looked down, then, in almost a gesture of modesty, raised one

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arm, touched his bare chest with one hand, as if concealing himself —protecting himself against what suddenly became a stunning, blinding ram-head that butted him simultaneously from both sides; the forces, absolutely equal, made him freeze, as if poured as a polyester as he stood; anyone watching would have thought him free to move, but he was ensnared for good by the surge passing from anode to cathode, with himself as—what, the ion ring? His body attracted the field; he felt it infuse him as a dissolving agent.

And then the left surge dropped; he staggered, glanced up involuntarily.

THE two bald, goggled Reich technicians were gone. He was in a far smaller chamber, and one elderly man sat at a desk, carefully logging from numbered tags a huge mound of suitcases and wrapped, tied parcels.

"Your clothing," the official said, "lies in a metal basket to your right marked 121628. And if you're faint, there's a cot; you may lie down."

"I'm—all right," Matson Glazer-Holliday said, and made his way unsteadily to his clothing; he dressed, then stood uncertainly.

"Here are your two items of luggage," the bureaucrat at the desk said, without looking up. "Numbers 39485 and 39486. Please arrange to remove them from the premises." He then examined his wristwatch. "No, excuse me. No one will be following you from the New New York nexus; take your time."

"Thanks." Matson himself picked up the heavy suitcases, walked toward a large double door. "Is this," he asked, "the right direction?"

"That will take you out on Laughing Willow Tree Avenue," the clerk informed him.

"I want a hotel."

"Any surface vehicle can transport you." The clerk returned to his work, broke contact; he had no more info to offer.

Pushing the door open, Matson stepped out onto the sidewalk.

He saw gray barracks.

Beside him, Freya appeared. The air was cold; she shivered and he, too, quaked, drew against her, stared and stared at the barracks; he saw row after row of them, and—charged, twelve-foot high wire fences with four strands of barbed wire at the top. And signs. The posted restrictive notices; he did not even need to read them.

Freya said, "Mat, have you ever heard of a town called Sparta?"

" 'Sparta,' " he echoed, standing holding his two suitcases.

"Here." She released his fin-

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gers, set the suitcases down. A few people, drably dressed, slunk by, silently, carefully paying no attention to them. "I was wrong," Freya said. "And the message of course to you, the all-clear, was spurious. Mat, I thought—"

"You thought," he said, "it was going to be—ovens."

She said, with quiet calmness, tossing her heavy dark mane of hair back and raising her chin to meet his gaze, look at him face-to-face, "It's work camps. The Soviet, not the Third Reich, model. Forced labor."

"Doing what? Clearing the planet? But the original authentic monitoring satellites reported that—"

"They seem," she said, "to be forming the nucleus of an army. First starting everyone out in labor gangs. To get them accustomed to discipline. The young males go into basic training at once; the rest of us—we'll probably serve in *that*." She pointed and he saw the ramp of a subsurface structure; he saw the descent mechanism and he knew, remembered from his youth, what it meant, this pre-war configuration.

A multi-level autofac. On continuous schedule, hence not entirely homeo. For round-the-clock operations, machines would not do, could not survive. Only shifts, alternating, of humans, could keep the belts moving; they had learned that in '82.

"Your police vets," Freya said, "are too old for immediate induction; most of them. So they'll be assigned to barracks, as we will be. I have the number they gave you and the one they gave me."

"Different quarters? We're not even *together?*"

Freya said, "I also have the mandatory forms for us to fill out; we list all our skills. So we can be useful."

"I'm old," he said.

"Then," Freya said, "you'll have to die. Unless you can conjure up a skill."

"I have one skill." In the suitcase resting on the pavement beside him he had a transmitter which, small as it was, would send out a signal which, in six months, would reach Terra.

Bending, he brought out the key, turned the lock of the suitcase. All he had to do was open the suitcase, feed an inch of punched data-tape into the orifice of the transmitter's encoder; the rest was automatic. He switched the power on; every electronic item mimicked clothing, especially shoes; it appeared as if he had come to Whale's Mouth to walk his life away, and elegantly at that.

"Why?" he asked Freya as he programmed, with a tiny scholarly construct, the inch of tape. "An army for what?"

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"I don't know, Mat. It's all Theodoric Ferry. I think Ferry is going to try to outspit the army on Terra that Horst Bertold commands. In the short time I've been here I've talked to a few people, but—they're so afraid. One man thought there'd been a non-humanoid sentient race found, and we're preparing to strike for its colony-planets; maybe after a while and we've been here—"

Matson peered up and said, "I've encoded the tape to read, *Garrison state. Sound out Bertold.* It'll go to our top pilot, Al Dosker, repeated over and over again, because at this distance the noise-factor—"

A laser beam removed the back of his head.

Freya shut her eyes.

A SECOND beam from the laser rifle with the telescopic sight destroyed first one suitcase and then its companion. And then a shiny, spic-and-span young soldier walked up, leisurely, the rifle held loosely; he glanced at her, up and down, carnally but with no particular passion, then looked down at the dead man, at Matson. "We caught your conversation on an audrec." He pointed, and Freya saw, then, on the overhang of the roof of the Telpor terminal building, a net-like interwoven mesh. "That man—" The soldier kicked —actually physically kicked with his toe—the corpse of Matson Glazer-Holliday, "—said something about 'our top pilot.' You're an organization, then. Friends of a United People? That it?"

She said nothing; she was unable to.

"Come along, honey," the soldier said to her. "For your psych-interrogation. We held it off because you were kind enough—dumb enough—to inform us that your husband was following you. But we never—"

He died, because, by means of her "watch" she had released the low-velocity cephalotropic cyanide dart; it moved slowly, but still he had not been able to evade it; he batted at it, childishly, with his hand, not quite alarmed, not quite wise and frightened enough, and its tip penetrated a vein near his wrist. And death came as swiftly and soundlessly as it had for Matson. The soldier swiveled and unwound and unwound in his descent to the pavement, and Freya, then, turned and ran—

At a corner she went to the right, and, as she ran down a narrow, rubbish-heaped alley, reached into her cloak, touched the aud transmitter which sent out an all-points, planet-wide alarm signal-alert; every Lies Incorporated employee here at Whale's Mouth would be picking it up, if this was not already ap-

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parent to him: if the alarm signal added anything to his knowledge, that which had probably come, crushingly, within the first five minutes here on this side—this one-way side—of the Telpor apparatuses. Well, anyhow she had done that; she had officially, through technical channels, alerted them, and that was all—*all* she could do.

She had no long-range intersystem transmitter as Matson had had; she could not send out a macrowave signal which would be picked up by Al Dosker at the Sol system six months hence. In fact none of the two thousand police agents of Lies Incorporated did. But they had weapons. She was, she realized with dread and disbelief, automatically now in charge of those of the organization who survived; months ago Matson had set her up legally so that on his death she assumed his chair, and this was not private: this had been circulated, memo-wise, throughout the organization.

What could she tell the police agents who had gotten through—tell them, of course, that Matson was dead, but what would be of use to them? What, she asked herself, *can we do?*

Eighteen years, she thought; do we have to wait for the *Omphalos*, for Rachmael ben Applebaum to arrive and see? Because by then it won't matter. For us, anyhow; nor for this generation.

Two men ran toward her and one bleated, "Moon and cow," shrilly, his face contorted with fear.

"Jack Horner," she said numbly. "I don't know what to do," she said to them. "Matson is dead and his big transmitter is destroyed. They were waiting for him; I led them right to him. I'm sorry." She could not face the two field reps of the organization; she stared rigidly past them. "Even if we put our weapons into use," she said, "they can take all of us out."

"But we can do some damage," one of the two police, middle-aged, with that fat sparetire at his middle, a tough old vet of the '82 war, said.

His companion, clasping a valise, said, "Yes, we can try, Miss Holm. Send out that signal; you have it?"

"No," she said, but she was lying and they knew it. "It's hopeless," she said. "Let's try to pass as authentic emigrants. Let them draft us, put us into the barracks."

THE seasoned, hard-eyed, paunchy one said, "Miss Holm, when they get into the luggage *they'll know*." To his companion he said, "Bring it out."

Together, as she watched, the two experienced field reps of Lies Incorporated assembled a small

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intricate weapon of a type she had never seen before; evidently it was from their advanced weapons archives.

To her the younger man said quietly, "Send the signal. For a fight. As soon as our people come through; keep the signal going so they'll pick it up as they emerge. We'll fight at this spot, not later, not when they have us cut down into individuals, one here, one there."

She. Touched. The. Signal-tab.

And then she said, quietly, "I'll try to get a message-unit back to Terra via Telpor. Maybe in the confusion—" Because there was going to be a lot of confusion as the Lies Incorporated men emerged and immediately picked up the fracas-in-progress signal. "—maybe it'll slip by."

"It won't," the hard-eyed old tomcat of a fighter said to her. He glanced at his companion. "But if we focus on a transmission station maybe we can take and keep control long enough to run a vid track through. Pass it back through the Telpor gate. Even if all two thou of us were to—" He turned to Freya. "Can you direct the reps to make it to this point?"

"I have no more microwave patterns," she said, this time truthfully. "Just those two."

"Okay, Miss Holm." The vet considered. "Vid transmissions through Telpor are accomplished over there." He pointed, and she saw an isolated multi-story structure, windowless, with a guarded entrance; in the gray sun of midday she caught a glint of metal, of armed sentries. "You have the code for back home you can transmit?"

"Yes," she said. "One of fifty. Mat and I both had them; committed to memory. I could transmit it by aud in ten seconds."

"I want," the wary, half-crouching veteran policeman said, "a *vid* track of this." He swung his hand at the landscape. "Something that can be spliced into the central coaxial cable and run on TV. Not just that we know but that they know." *They.* The people back home—the innocents who lay beyond the one-way gate; forever, she thought, because eighteen years is, really, forever.

"What's the code?" the younger field rep asked her.

Freya said, "Forgot to pack my Irish linen handkerchiefs. Please transmit via Telpor.'" She explained, "We, Mat and I, worked out all logical possibilities. This comes the closest. Sparta."

"Yep," the older vet said. "The warrior state. The trouble-maker. Well, it is close geographically to Athens, although not quite close enough." To his companion he said, "Can we get in there and transmit the aud signal?"

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He picked up the weapon which they had assembled.

"Sure," his younger companion said, nodding.

The older man clicked the weapon on.

Freya saw, then, into the grave and screamed; she ran and as she ran, struggled to get away, she knew it for what it was: a refined form of nerve gas that—and then her coherent thoughts ceased and she simply ran.

The armed sentry-soldiers guarding the windowless building ran, too.

And, unaffected, their metabolisms insulated by pre-injective antidotal hormones, the two field reps of Lies Incorporated dogtrotted toward the windowless structure, and, as they trotted, brought out small, long-range laser pistols with telescopic sights.

That was her final view of them; at that point panic and flight swallowed her and it was only darkness. And a darkness into which people of all sorts—she glimpsed, felt, them dimly—ran along side in company with her; she was not alone: the fugue radiated.

Mat, she thought. You will not have your police state here at Whale's Mouth, and I warned you; I told you. But, she thought, maybe now *they* won't either. If that encoded message can be put through. *If.*

And if, on the Terran side, there is someone smart enough to know what to do with it.

VIII

IN his ship near the orbit of Pluto Al Dosker received, routinely, the message transmitted from Freya Holm at Whale's Mouth to the New New York office of Lies Incorporated.

FORGOT TO PACK MY IRISH LINEN HANDKERCHIEFS. PLEASE TRANSMIT VIA TELPOR. FREYA.

He walked to the rear of the ship, leisurely, because at this distance from the sun everything seemed entropic, slowed down; it was as if, out here, there was a slower beat of the sidereal clock.

Opening the code box he ran his finger down the Fs. Then found the key. He then took the message and fed it directly into the computer which held the spools that comprised the contents of the box.

Out came a paper ribbon with typed words. He read them.

MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. BARRACKS LIFE ON SPARTAN BASIS. PREPARATION FOR WAR AGAINST UNKNOWN FOE.

Dosker stood for a moment, then, taking the original encoded message, as handled by Vidphone Corporation, ran it through the computer once again. And, once again, he read

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the message in clear and once again it said what it had to say —could not be denied from saying. And there was no doubt, because Matson Glazer-Holliday himself had programmed the computer-box.

This, Dosker thought. Out of fifty possibilities ranging from the Elysium field to—hell.

Roughly, this lay halfway on the hell side. By a gross count of ten. It ranked about as bad as he had expected.

So, he thought, now we know.

We know . . . *and we can't validate it.*

The scrap of ribbon, the encoded message, was, incredible as it seemed, completely, utterly worthless.

Because, he asked himself, *whom do we take it to?*

Their own organization, Lies Incorporated, had been truncated by Mat's action, by the sending of their best men to Whale's Mouth; all which remained was the staff of bureaucrats in New New York—and himself.

And, of course, Rachmael ben Applebaum out in 'tween space in the *Omphalos*. Busily learning Attic Greek.

Now, from the New New York office, a second message, encoded, arrived; this, too, he fed to the computer, more quickly, this time. It came out drearily and he read it with futile shame—shame because he had tried and failed to stop what Matson planned; he felt the moral weight on himself.

WE CANNOT HOLD OUT. VIVISECTION IN PROGRESS.

Can I help you? he wondered, suffering in his impotent rage. Goddam you, Matson, he thought, you had to do it; you were greedy. And you took two thousand men and Freya Holm with you, to be slaughtered over there where we can't do anything because "we" consist of nothing.

However, he could perform one final act—his effort, not connected with the effort to save the multitude of Terran citizens who, within the following days, weeks, would be filing through Telpor gates to Whale's Mouth, but to save someone who deserved a reprieve from a self-imposed burden: a burden which these two encoded messages via Telpor and the Vidphone Corp had rendered obsolete.

Taking the risk that a UN monitor might pick up his signal, Al Dosker sent out an u.h.f. beamed radio signal to the Omphalos and Rachmael ben Applebaum.

WHEN he raised the *Omphalos*, now at hyper-see velocity and beyond the Sol system, Dosker asked brutally, "How's the odes of Pindar coming?"

"Just simple fables so far,"

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Rachmael's voice came, distantly, mixed with the background of static, of inter-system interference as the signal-gathering cone aboard Dosker's ship rotated, tried to gather the weak, far-distant impulse. "But you weren't supposed to contact me," Rachmael said, "unless—"

"Unless," Dosker said, "this happened. We have, at Lies Incorporated, an encoding method that can't be broken. Because the data are not in what's transmitted. Listen carefully, Rachmael." And, amplified by his ship's transmitter, his words—he hoped—were reaching the *Omphalos;* a segment of his equipment recorded his words and broadcast them several times: a multiplication of the signal to counter, on a statistical basis, the high background; by utilizing the principle of repetition he expected to get his message through to Rachmael. "You know the joke about the prison inmate," Dosker said, "who stands up and yells, 'Three.' And everyone laughs."

"Yes," Rachmael said alertly. "Because 'three' refers to an entire multi-part joke. Which all the inmates know; they've been confined together so long."

"By that method," Dosker said, "out transmission from Whale's Mouth operated today. We have a binary computer as the decoder. Originally, we started out by flipping a coin for each letter of the alphabet. Tails made it zero or gate-shut; heads means one or gate-open. It's either zero or one; that's the binary computer's modus operandi. Then we invented fifty message-units which describe possible conditions on the other side; the messages were constructed in such a way that each consisted of a unique sequence of ones and zeros. I—" His voice came out ragged, hoarse. "I have just now received a message, which when reduced to the elements of the binary system consist of a sequence reading: 11101001100111010110000010011010100110000010011111010000111. There is nothing intrinsic in this binary sequence that can be decoded, because it simply acts as one of the fifty unique signals known to our box—here on my ship—and it trips one particular tape. But its length—it gives a spurious impression to cryptographers of an *intrinsic* message."

"And your tape—" Rachmael said, "that was tripped—"

"I'll paraphrase," Dosker said. "The operational word is—Sparta." He was silent, then.

"A garrison state?" Rachmael's voice came.

"Yes."

"Against whom?"

"They didn't say. A second message came, but it added relatively little. Except that it came

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through in clear and it told us that they can't hold out. They're being decimated by the military, over there."

"And you're sure this is authentic data?" Rachmael asked.

"Only Freya Holm, Matson and I," Dosker said, "have the decode boxes into which the messages can be fed as a binary tripping-sequence. It came from Freya, evidently; anyhow she signed the first. He added, "They didn't even try to sign the second one."

"Well," Rachmael said, "then I will turn back. There's no point to my trip, now."

"That's up to you to decide." He waited, wondering what Rachmael ben Applebaum's decision would be; but, he thought, as you say, it really doesn't matter, because the real tragedy is twenty-four light years away, and not the destruct, the taking-out, of Lies Incorporated's two thousand best people, but—the forty million who've gone before. And the eighty million or more who will follow, since, though we have this knowledge on *this* side of the teleport gates, there's no means by which we can communicate it over the mass info media to the population—

He was thinking that when the UN pursuit ships, three of them like black sliding fish, closed noiselessly in on him, reached a.-to-a. missile range; their missiles fired, and Dosker's Lies Incorporated ship was cut into fragments.

Stunned, passive, he floated in his self-contained suit with its own air, heat, water, transmitter, waste-disposal deposit box, squeeze-tubes of food . . . he drifted on and on, seemingly for eternity, thinking about vague and even happy things, about a planet of green forests and of women and the tinkling noise of get-togethers, and yet knowing dully that he could live only a short time like this, and wondering, too, if the UN had gotten the *Omphalos* as they had gotten him; obviously their vigilant switchboard of monitors had picked up his radio carrier-wave, but whether they had picked up Rachmael's, too, which operated on another band . . . god, he thought, I hope not; I hope it's just me.

HE was still hoping when the UN pursuit ship moved up beside him, sent out a robot-like construct which fished at him until it had with great care grappled him without puncturing his suit. Amazed, he thought, Why don't they just dig a little hole in the suit-fabric, let out the air and heat, let me float here and meanwhile die?

It bewildered him. And now a hatch of the UN pursuit ship was opening; he was reeled in,

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like an emeshed quarry; the hatch slammed shut and he felt the artificial gravity which prevailed within the expensive, ultra-modern vessel; he lay prone and then, wearily, got to his feet, stood.

Facing him, a uniformed UN senior officer, armed, said, "Take off your suit. Your emergency suit. Understand?" He spoke with a heavy accent; Dosker saw, by his armband, that he was from the Nordic League.

Piece by piece, Dosker shed his emergency suit.

"You Goths," Dosker said, "seem to be running things." At the UN, anyhow. He wondered about Whale's Mouth.

The UN officer, still pointing the laser pistol at him, said, "Sit down. We are returning to Terra. *Nach* Terra; *versteh'n?*" Behind him a second UN employee, not armed, sat at the control console; the ship was on a high-velocity course directed toward the third planet and Dosker guessed that only an hour's travel lay ahead. "The Secretary General," the UN officer said, "has asked to speak to you personally. Meanwhile, compose yourself and wait. Would you like a magazine to read? We have *UN Back-peop Assist.* Or an entertain-spool to watch?

"No," Dosker said, and sat staring straight ahead, blindly.

The UN officer said, "We tracked the *Omphalos* by her carrier-wave transmission, also. As we did your ship."

"Good bit," Dosker said sardonically.

"However, due to the distance involved, it will take several days to reach her."

Dosker said, "But you will, though."

"That is a certainty," the UN officer said, with his heavy Swedish accent, nodding. He had no doubts. Nor did Dosker.

The only issue was the time-factor. As the officer said, some few days; no more.

He stared ahead, sat, waited, as the high-velocity UN pursuit ship hurried toward Terra, New New York and Horst Bertold.

* * *

At the UN Headquarters in New New York he was given a thorough physical examination; the doctors and nurses attached one testing apparatus after another, checked their readings, located no grafted-in subdermal devices.

"You survived your ordeal amazingly well," the doctor in charge informed him, at last, as he was given his clothing and allowed once more to dress.

"And now what?" Dosker asked.

"The Secretary General is ready to see you," the doctor said briefly, marking his chart; he nodded his head toward a door.

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Having dressed, Dosker walked step by step to the door, opened it.

"Please hurry it up," Horst Bertold said.

Shutting the door after him Dosker said, "Why?"

Seated at his large antique oak desk, the UN Secretary General glanced up; he was a heavy man, red-haired, with a pinched, elongated nose and almost colorless small lips. His features were small but his shoulders, his arms and his ribcage, bulged, as if from countless steam baths and from handball; his legs, his feet, showed the tonus of great childhood walking trips and miles of bike riding: this was an outdoor man, confined by his job to a desk, but longing for open spaces which did not now exist. A thoroughly healthy man, physically-speaking, Dosker thought. Strange, he thought, and, in spite of himself, received a good impression.

"We picked up your radio communication with the *Omphalos*," Bertold said, his English perfect—in fact overly-perfect; it had a tape-like quality, and probably it had been so learned. The impression here was not so good. "Thereby as you know we located both ships. We also understand that you are now the ranking executive of Lies Incorporated, Miss Holm and Mr. Glazer-Holliday having crossed via Telpor—under cover names, of course—to Whale's Mouth."

Dosker shrugged, said nothing, imparted no free information; waited.

"However—" Horst Bertold tapped his pen against the top document on his desk, frowned. "This is a transcript, verbatim, of the interchange between you and the fanatic, Rachmael ben Applebaum. You initiated the radio exchange; *you* raised the *Omphalos*." Bertold glanced up and his blue, light eyes were sharp. "We have put our cryptographers on the sequence in code which you transmitted . . . the same which you previously received from the Vidphone Corp. Intrinsically it means nothing. But in the wreckage of your ship we located your decoding computer, the intact box with its fifty tapes. We therefore matched the transmission and recorded binary sequence to the proper tape. And it was as you informed ben Applebaum."

"Did that surprise you?"

"Of course not," Bertold said swiftly. "Why should you deceive your own client? And at the risk—a risk which should not have been taken, as it so turned out—of revealing the location of your own vessel? Anyhow—" Bertold's voice sank to an introspective murmur. "We still were not satisfied. We therefore checked over our monitoring—"

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"They're being wiped out, over there," Dosker said. "The two thousand field reps and Mat and Freya." His voice was toneless; he told this because he knew they would get it by a 'wash anyhow—they could get anything that was there, any memory, any motives, plans, projects; after all, his own organization, far smaller than the UN, could do so—had done so, over many years, and to many persons, by means of psychiatrists and their techniques.

Bertold said, "Trails of Hoffman Limited and Theodoric Ferry entirely control Newcolonized-land. The UN has no staff at Whale's Mouth. All we know is what we have received, as a courtesy, in aud and vid form. The info signals through the Telpors, over these years of colonization; our original monitoring satellites have been inoperative ever since THL auspical jurisdiction began."

THERE was silence and then Dosker said incredulously, "Then this is as much news to you as it is to—"

"We believed the fifteen years of aud and vid tapes; we saw no reason to check for ourselves. THL had volunteered to underwrite the colonization economically; they picked up the tab and we gave them the franchise *because they owned the Telpor patent and equipment.* Dr. von Einem's patents are possessed exclusively by THL; he had the legal right to so arrange that. And this—" Bertold picked up the top document from his desk, showed it to Dosker; it was a typed transcript, in its entirety, of his own conversation by radio with Rachmael. "This," Horst Bertold said, "is the result."

Dosker said, "Tell me what it means." Because, he thought, I don't know. I saw the original messages when they arrived; I understand the literal meaning of the words. But that's all.

The UN Secretary General said "Out of the forty million colonists Ferry has conscripted an army and provided it with modern, sophisticated weapons. There is no 'non-humanoid race,' no non-Terran culture to encounter. Had there been our unmanned monitors would have detected them; by now we've touched every star-system in our galaxy." He stared at Dosker. "It's us," he said. "The UN. That's what Theodoric Ferry is proposing to engage. When enough colonists have gone across. Then the up-to-then 'one-way' aspect of the teleportation equipment will suddenly reveal that the so-called Theorem One was false."

"Here?" Dosker said, then. "They'll reenter through their own Telpor outlets?"

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"And take us on," Bertold said. "But not now. At this point they're not quite large enough." To himself he said, "At least so we estimate; we studied samples of groups who had emigrated; he can't have more than one million men actually under arms. But weapons—they may have u.s.h.: ultra sophisticated hardware; after all, they've got von Einem working for them."

Dosker said, "Where is von Einem? At Whale's Mouth?"

"We put a tail on him instantly." Bertold's fingers convulsed, crushed the document. "And proved already—*ganz genug!*—that we were correct. Von Einem has been all these years passing back and forth between Terra and Whale's Mouth; he has always used—they have always—operated the Telpor instruments for two-way travel—*so it's verified,* Dosker. Verified!" He stared at Dosker.

IX

WHEN Rachmael ben Applebaum made out the dim, shadowy shapes of the UN pursuit ships as they approached to escort the *Omphalos* he knew that, whatever else was a cover, at least this much was true: the UN had traced him, had him and no doubt Dosker as well. So—he clicked on the microwave transmitter and raised, after an interval, the UN pursuit ships' local commanding officer.

"I'll believe you," Rachmael said, "when I hear Al Dosker say it." And when I look him over, he said to himself, for signs of a cephalic 'wash. But—why would they say it if it wasn't true? They had him; he and the *Omphalos,* detected, were now booty captured by the armed inter-system vessels of the great UN structure that spanned from planet to planet. Why make up a cover when there was no force to influence, no force able to provide any resistance?

God above, he thought. If it's true, then we can rely on Horst Bertold. We let our prejudices blind us . . . von Einem is German and Horst Bertold is German. But that does not any more prove they are working together, are secret collaborators, than, say, any two Ubangis or any two Jews. Adolf Hitler was not even a German . . . so our own thinking, he realized, has betrayed us. But—maybe now we can believe this. We can see. New Whole Germany has produced Dr. Sepp von Einem and Trails of Hoffman Limited . . . but it may also have produced something else when it created Horst Bertold.

We will see, Rachmael said to himself.

—Will wait until we are in New New York at UN Headquarters; face Horst Bertold and

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see the evidence of the assertion given by relayed macroradio signal.

The assertion that as of six a.m. New New York time this morning, UN troops had entered all retail outlets of Trails of Hoffman Limited, had seized the Telpor instruments—had, throughout Terra, arbitrarily and without warning of any kind, halted emigration to Whale's Mouth.

* * *

Twelve hours later Rachmael was led by a worried, overworked female secretary into the UN Secretary General's office.

"The fanatic," Horst Bertold said, surveying him. "The idealist who sparked the hankering in Matson Glazer-Holliday that caused him to attempt his *coup d'etat* at Whale's Mouth." He turned to an aide. "Bring in the Telpor *Apparat*."

Seconds later the familiar bipolar mechanism was noisily carted into the UN leader's office, along with a thoroughly-unnerved-looking technician; minus his goggles he looked frightened and—small.

To the Telpor technician, Horst Bertold said, "Does this operate to permit teleportation two ways? Or only one? *Zwei oder ein?* Antworte." . .

"Just outward, Mein Herr Sekretar General," the technician quavered. "As Theorem One demonstrates, the recession of matter toward—"

Horst Bertold said to his aide, "Bring in our 'wash psychiatrists. Have them start with their EEG machines."

At that, the Telpor technician said, in a voice that broke with dismayed intimidation, *"Dasz brauchen Sie nicht."*

"He's saying," Bertold said to Rachmael, "that he will cooperate; we don't need to employ our psychiatrists with him. So ask him." He jerked his head fiercely toward the cowering THL employee, this man in his white smock who had assisted in the emigration of literally millions of innocent human beings. "Ask him whether the Telpors work both ways."

The technician said, virtually inaudibly, *"Beide.* Both ways."

"There never was any 'Theorem One,' " Bertold snapped.

"Sie haben Recht," the technician agreed, nodding.

"Bring in Dosker," Bertold said to his female overworked secretary.

When Dosker appeared he said to Rachmael at once, "Freya is still alive over there." He indicated the Telpor instrument. "We've been in contact through this. But—" He hesitated.

Horst Bertold said, "Matson Glazer-Holliday is dead. They murdered him immediately. But nearly half of Lies Incorporated's

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field personnel remain alive at various installations at Newcolonizedland, and we're beginning to supply them on a strategic basis. With weapons of types which they instantly need. And presently we will, at tactical spots, try commando teams; we can do a lot, I think, with our commando teams."

"What can I do?" Rachmael said. He felt overwhelming impotence; it was going on—had been going on—without him. While he journeyed—pointlessly—through 'tween, utterly empty, space.

THIS, the UN Secretary General seemed to read on his face. "You awakened Matson," he pointed out. "Which caused Matson to attempt his aborted coup. And the relayed message from Freya Holm to Dosker and then to the *Omphalos* informed us of the reality hidden under Theodoric Ferry's cover; a cover which we carry the moral stigma for accepting all these fifteen years. Everything based on the one fundamental hoax that teleportation could be achieved in only one direction . . ." He grimaced. "However, Trails of Hoffman Limited made an error as great as their cover when they did not impede your two thousand Lies Incorporated veterans from crossing over." To Dosker he said, "*But even so, that would not have been enough.* However, with our tactical support—"

"It wasn't enough even at the start," Dosker said, "since they took out Matson right away." Half to himself, half to Rachmael, he said, "We never had a chance. Probably Matson never knew; he probably didn't even live that long. Anyhow, maybe you can retrieve Freya. Do you want to?"

Instantly Rachmael said, "Yes." To Horst Bertold he said, "Can I get equipment out of you? Defensive screens, if not offensive hardware? And I'll go alone." They would not, in the confusion, notice him, perhaps. Whale's Mouth had become a battlefield, and too many participants were involved; one lone man was a cypher, a mote; he would enter inconspicuously and if he found her at all it would be that way, as an entity too trifling to be considered by the vast warring entities. Within the context of the power-struggle which had already truncated Lies Incorporated; one contender had been abolished at the start, and now only the two monoliths existed in the field to slug it out, THL on one hand, the UN as its wise old antagonist, its roots of victory deep in the last century. The UN, he reflected, had a head-start, that of fifty years.

But Trails of Hoffman Limited had the inventive genius of half-

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senile but still crafty old Dr. Sepp von Einem. And—the inventor of the Telpor instrument might not have ceased with that construct.

He wondered if Horst Bertold had considered this.

It didn't matter, because if von Einem had produced something else of equal—or of merely significant—value, *it would show up now.*

In the streets of Newcolonized-land, whatever Dr. Sepp von Einem and THL had over the years developed would be at this moment in full use. Because this was, for all participants, the Dies Irae, the Day of Wrath; now they were, like beasts in the field, being tried. And God help, Rachmael thought the contender who was found wanting. Because out of this only one participant would live; there would be extended to the loser no partial, no half, life. Not in *this* arena.

He himself—he had only one task, as he saw it. That of getting Freya Holm out of Whale's Mouth and back safely to Terra.

The eighteen year journey, the odyssey aboard the *Omphalos,* learning Attic Greek so that he could read the *Bachae* in the original—that childlike fantasy had withered at the press of the iron glove of the reality-situation, the struggle going on—not eighteen years from now—but at this instant, at the Whale's Mouth terminals of six thousand Telpor stations.

"'*Sein Herz voll Hasz geladen,*'" Horst Bertold said to Rachmael. "You speak Yiddish? You understand?"

"I speak a little Yiddish," Rachmael said, "but that's German. 'His heart heavy with hate.' What's that from?"

"From the Civil War in Spain," Bertold said. "From a song of the International Brigade. Germans, mostly, who had left the Third Reich to fight in Spain against Franco, in the 1930s. They were, I suppose, Communists. But—they were fighting Fascism, and very early; *and they were Germans.* So they were always 'good' Germans . . . what that man, Hans Beimler, hated was Naziism and Fascism, in all its stages and states and manifestations." After a pause he said, "We fought the Nazis, too, we 'good' Germans; *verges' uns nie.*" Forget us never, Bertold had said, quietly, calmly. Because we did not merely join the fight late, in the 1950s or '60s, but from the start. The first human beings to fight to the death, to kill and be killed by the Nazis, were—

Germans.

"And Terra," Bertold said to Rachmael, "ought not to forget that. As I hope they will not forget who at this moment is taking out Dr. Sepp von Einem and crea-

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tures allied with him. Theodoric Ferry, his boss . . . who, by the way, is an American." He smiled at Rachmael. "But there are 'good' Americans. Despite the A-bomb dropped on those Japanese women and children and elderly."

Rachmael was silent; he could not answer this.

"All right," Bertold said, then. "We will put you together with a wep-x, a weapon expert. To see what gear you should have. And then good luck. I hope you bring back Miss Holm." He smiled—fleetingly. And turned at once to other matters.

A minor UN official plucked at Rachmael's sleeve. "I'm to take charge of your problem," he explained. "I will be handling it from now on. Tell me, Mr. ben Applebaum; precisely what contemporary—and I do not mean last month's or last year's—weapons of war you are accustomed to operating, if any? And how recently you have been exposed to the neurological and bacterial—"

"I've had absolutely no military training," Rachmael said. "Or antineuro or -bac modulation."

"We can still assist you," the minor UN official said. "There is certain equipment requiring no prior experience. However—" He made a mark on the sheet attached to his clipboard. "This does make a difference; eighty percent of the hardware available would be useless to you." He smiled encouragingly. "We must not let it get us down, Mr. ben Applebaum."

"I won't," Rachmael said grimly. "So I'll be teleported to Whales' Mouth after all."

"Yes, within a matter of an hour."

"The unteleported man," Rachmael murmured. "Will be teleported." Instead of enduring the eighteen years aboard the *Omphalos*. Ironic.

"Are you capable morally," the UN official inquired, "of employing a nerve gas, or would you prefer to—"

"Anything," Rachmael said, "that'll bring back Freya. Anything except the phosphorus weapons, the jellied petroleum products; I won't use any of those, and also the bone-marrow destroyers—leave those out. But lead slugs, the old-fashioned muzzle-expelled shells; I'll accept them, as well as the laser beam artifacts." He wondered what variety of weapon had gotten Matson Glazer-Holliday, the most professional of men in this area.

"We have something new," the UN official said, consulting his clipboard, "and according to the Defense Department people very promising. It's a time-warping construct that sets up a field which coagulates the —"

"Just equip me," Rachmael

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said. "And get me over there. To her."

"Right away," the UN official promised, and led him rapidly down a side hall to a hi-speed descent ramp. To the UN Advance-weapons Archives.

AT the retail outlet of Trails Hoffman Limited, Jack and Ruth McElhatten and their two children emerged from a flapple taxi; a robot-like organism carted their luggage, all seven overstuffed seedy—borrowed for the most part—suitcases, as they entered the modern, small building which for them was to be the last stopping-point on Terra.

Going up to the counter, Jack McElhatten searched about for a clerk to wait on them. Jeez, he thought; just when you decide to make the Big Move *they* decide to step out for a coffee break.

A smartly uniformed armed UN soldier, with an armband identifying him as a member of the crack UAR division, approached him. "What did you wish?"

Jack McElhatten said, "Hell, we came here to emigrate. I've got the poscreds." He reached for his wallet. "Where are the forms to fill out, and then I know we got to take shots and—"

The UN soldier politely said, "Sir, have you watched your info media during the last forty-eight hours?"

"We've been packing," Ruth McElhatten spoke up. "Why, what is it? Has something happened?"

And then, through an open rear door, Jack McElhatten saw *it*. The Telpor. And his heart bent with mingled dread and anticipation. What an admirably large move this was, this true migration; seeing the twin wall-like polar surfaces of the Telpor was to see—the frontier itself. In his mind he recalled the years of TV scenes of grasslands, of miles of green, lush—

"Sir," the UN soldier said, "read this notice." He pointed to a square white with words so dark, so unglamorous, that Jack McElhatten, even without reading them, felt the glow, the wonder of what for him was a long-held inner vision, depart.

"Oh good lord," Ruth said, from beside him as she read the notice. "The UN—it's closed down all the Telpor agencies. Emigration has been suspended." She glanced in dismay at her husband. "Jack, it's now illegal for us to emigrate, it says."

The UN soldier said, "Later on, madam. Emigration will resume. When the situation is resolved." He turned away, then, to halt a second couple, who, with four children, had entered the Trails of Hoffman office.

Through the still-open rear door, McElhatten saw, to his

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dumb disbelief, four work-garbed laborers; they were busily, sweatily, efficiently torch-cutting into sections the Telpor equipment.

He then forced himself to read the notice.

After he had read it the UN soldier tapped him—not unkindly—on the shoulder, pointed out a nearby TV set, which, turned on, was being watched by the second couple and their four children. "These are Newcolonized-land," the UN soldier said. "You see?" His English was not too good, but he was attempting to explain; he wanted the McElhattens to understand *why*.

APPROACHING the TV set, Jack McElhatten saw gray, barracks-like structures with tiny, slotted windows like raptor eyes. And—high fences. He stared, uncomprehendingly . . . and yet, underneath, comprehending completely; he did not even have to listen to the aud track, to the UN announcer.

Ruth whispered, "My god. It's a—concentration camp."

A puff of smoke and the top floors of the gray cement building disappeared; dwarfed dark shapes scampered, and rapid-fire weapons clattered in the background of the announcer's British-type voice; the calm, reasonable commentary explained what did not need to be explained.

At least not after this sight.

"Is that," Ruth said to her husband, "how we would have lived over there?"

Presently he said, to her and their two children, "Come on. Let's go home." He signalled the robot-organism to pick their luggage up once more.

"But," Ruth protested, "couldn't the UN have helped us? They have all those welfare agencies—

Jack McElhatten said, "The UN is protecting us now. And not with welfare agencies." He indicated the work-garbed laborers busy dismantling the Telpor unit.

"But so late—"

"Not," he said, "too late." He signalled the robot-thing to carry their seven bulging suitcases back outside onto the sidewalk; avoiding the many passing people, the dense, always dense, sidwalk traffic, he searched for a flapple taxi to take himself and his family home again to their miserably cramped, hated conapt.

A man, distributing leaflets, approached him, held out a broadsheet; McElhatten reflexively accepted it. The Friends of a United People outfit, he saw. Glaring banner:

UN VERIFIES COLONY TYRANNY

He said, aloud, "They were right. The cranks. The lunatics, like that guy who wanted to make the eighteen-year-trip by interstellar ship." He carefully folded the broadsheet, put it into his

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pocket to read later; right now he felt too numbed. "I hope," he said aloud, "that my boss will take me back."

"They're *fighting*," Ruth said. "You could see on the TV screen; they showed UN soldiers and then others in funny uniforms I never saw before in all my—"

"You think," Jack McElhatten asked his wife, "you could sit in the taxi with the kids while I find a bar and get one good stiff drink?"

She said, "Yes. I could." Now a flapple taxi was swooping down, attracted; it headed for the curb, the four of them and their mound of fat enticing luggage its tropism.

"Because," Jack McElhatten said, "I can use for instance a bourbon and water. A double." And then, he said to himself, I'm heading for UN recruiting headquarters and volunteer.

He did not know for what—not yet. But they would tell him.

His help was needed; he felt it in his blood. A war had to be won, and then, years from now but not eighteen as it had been for that nut written up in the 'papes, they could do it, could emigrate. But before that—the fighting. The winning of Whale's Mouth all over again. Actually, for the first time.

But even before that: the two drinks.

As soon as the luggage was loaded he got with his family into the flapple taxi and gave it the name of the bar where he often stopped after work. Obligingly the taxi spouted up into the overcrowded, me-first, nose-to-nose density of supra-surface Terran unending traffic.

And as the taxi rose Jack McElhatten dreamed again of tall, windtouched grasses and frog-like creatures and open plains meandered over by quaint animals that were not afraid because no one intended to hurt them. But his awareness of the reality remained and ran parallel to the dream; he saw both at once and he put his arm around his wife and hugged her and was silent.

The taxi, expertly maneuvering among all the other vehicles, directed itself toward the bar on the east side of town; it knew its way, too. It, also, knew its task.

THE END

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I AM BONARO

By JOHN STARR NIENDORFF

Once you start the process of change,

something is bound to be lost along the way.

ONLY the ticket agent saw the old man as he was thrown from the motionless boxcar and tumbled crazily to the gravel-covered earth. The train hissed and wheezed for a moment as it gathered energy for movement then began crawling away from the station.

Slamming the lid of his cash-box closed, the agent ran from the tiny office to track-side where the old man lay. He paused for a long breath then called, "You okay, Mister?"

The old man stirred noiselessly. Dressed in faded coveralls, he had long white hair that fell in tangled disarray to his rounded shoulders; his matted, filth-encrusted beard was the same white as his hair.

"You need any help, old man?"

Painfully slowly, the old man rose to his knees, pushed his arms hard against the ground, and shoved his body erect. The agent took a startled step backward when he saw the face: the most pitiful, wretched face he had ever seen. Brittle skin, like old parchment, was shrunk against the bone and eroded with deep wrinkles; and eyes that were hollow, empty, and desperately sad.

Across the front of his shirt, a crudely-lettered cardboard sign, pinned carelessly onto the wrinkled cloth, proclaimed simply, "I AM BONARO."

"Bonaro? That your name?"

The old man gave no sign of recognition, for he was incapable of even that elementary act. He only began to dig deep into his trouser pocket, bringing out a soiled yellow mass that he gripped tightly in one withered hand. It was a sponge.

He held it out.

The agent tentatively reached out his own hand, "For me?"

Bonaro said nothing, but held out the sponge until he was cer-

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tain that the agent did not understand, then he drew it back and let the hand fall limply.

"Bonaro? I guess that's your name. If you'd like some coffee, I've got a pot inside. Otherwise, you'd better beat it."

Bonaro's face remained immobile. Not even his empty eyes altered their fixed stare.

"Look, friend, if you don't need help, at least stay away from the tracks. They're dangerous. You understand that? Dangerous. You'll get hurt if you fool around here without knowing what you're doing."

Bonaro swayed uncertainly as though he were going to fall then he held out the sponge once more, hesitated a moment, and began to pad silently away from the tracks, holding the dirty sponge in front of him as if it were a guidepost by which he steered.

Old Bonaro was not aware of having been thrown from the train; he was not aware of having met the ticket agent. He only knew that he was Somewhere . . . and that which he sought might be anywhere.

HE had been five years old when he first wished himself different. The place he had lived was high above the asphalt streets, a slim wooden shambles squeezed between rotting tenaments. He had distant memories of a thing called Father: a loud, dirty man who never shaved and snored raucously. And Mother: a screaming, anxious assortment of abrupt nervous reactions like spank and slap and swear.

Bonaro recalled being locked in a closet because he had cursed at his father; a closet that was small and dark, where spiders crawled and tickled his skin and the groans of the tired walls were magnified until they filled his head with droaning, foreign speech.

He sat there for longer than he knew, without moving, until he saw a tiny sliver of dusty light along the bottom of the closet door, and crouching down with his ear close to the splintery floor, he could almost see outside.

Young Bonaro knew that he could never escape through that crack beneath the door. A piece of paper could. A coat hanger would slide through there. A slippery glob of mud could do it. So Bonaro wished himself a slipprey glob of mud, spreading himself out thin on the floor. It was difficult at first, forcing each particle of himself through that slim slit, but finally he oozed the last drop out of the closet and wished himself Bonaro.

His Father had beaten him for getting out; after carefully examining the lock on the closet

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door, he had beaten Young Bonaro with a long board until the boy was strangling on his own blood.

THE Old Man thought of that time as he walked away from the train station and into a wide main street.

When did he next wish . . . ? When he had been about twelve. Bad-father had taught him to steal while Bad-mother laughed. Stealing was easy for Bonaro when he learned how to run away and hide, and he was never caught until that time when he was twelve and stole the Man's wallet.

He had run for many blocks until his body had refused to carry him further, and he collapsed into a soft pile of rags and trash. Seeing the walls high around him meant nothing until he saw the men coming after him, then jerking his body upright, he flung his eyes violently in every direction where escape might lie. A high brick wall . . . a building . . . a wooden fence twice his own height . . there was no way out and the men were after him. So Bonaro did the only thing he could: he wished himself part of that pile of trash and they never found him.

* * *

The train station was far behind.

"'Scuse me, fella. You okay?" To Bonaro, the policeman was only another human form to which he held out the sponge.

"You can't talk, is that it?" The policeman pulled a note pad and pencil from the pocket of his uniform. "Maybe you need help. Can you write?"

The hand in which Bonaro held the sponge began to quiver.

"Now, look here, old man. I guess I don't understand, but you darned near caused about five accidents by walking across that street without watching the traffic. You be careful from now on."

Then as the policeman went away, Bonaro's thoughts went back.

On his twentieth birthday, he had first seen the words "socially incorrigible" on his progress chart in the juvenile home. He learned that his father had died, his mother was arrested for a reason he didn't understand.

But Bonaro never cared, because he could always wish.

Hang-Pants, the hoodlum, had thought Bonaro an easy mark—one fist to put him senseless on the sidewalk—when Bonaro had wished himself a big rock. Hang-Pants left with a broken hand. That was funny.

Bonaro had killed the priest in front of a hundred worshippers and laughed as he wished himself a gleaming golden cross.

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"I AM BONARO." The sign flapped on his chest as he stepped into the diner and sat down on a tiny stool. The young waitress looked suspiciously at his bedraggled appearance.

"Help you, sir?"

She suddenly jerked her body back as he thrust out the mouldy sponge . . . Bonaro's memories were vague in his head as he thought of the many, many fears, of being alive.

A dark night and a dog's bark . . . *fear* . . . wish to be a lion.

Steep stairs, slippery . . . *fear* . . . wish a rubber ball.

Many . . . so many each day . . . uncounted when life was steal and kill and wish-different to escape.

"Help you, sir?" the waitress asked again.

They had come after him that final night with torches. Because they knew it was Bonaro who had killed their little girl. Bonaro had stood tall, boldly on the wide concrete highway as they came for him. He saw the mob crunching closer, their kerosene torches flaming and flashing in the darkness.

They marched across the field onto the road where he stood.

What could he become? To hide on this barren hardness?

One torch wiggled and sailed like an exploding star above the mob, arcing high toward Bonaro. He saw it streak down and felt it hitting his chest, the pungent odor of the kerosene filling his head as flame attacked his shirt. His body was heat and fire as he pounded open palms against the growing horror of burning flesh as his clothes ignited.

Water! Water, said his mind as he dissolved himself into a puddle, seeping away from the scorching clothes, gathering in a pool on the road. He felt cool. The mob would go. He felt cool as a tender breeze caressed his dampness and he waited until he felt the warmth that meant sun. Sun meant time had passed, the mob would be gone, and he wished himself Bonaro again.

Water, a puddle in the road, is drawn into the wind—evaporates. Bonaro almost screamed knowing why he had felt the coolness. What part had gone away with the wind? Eyes? Arms? No! His body was whole but something still was gone.

Gone in water which goes on the wind, then to clouds, to rain. Rain comes back. Water is never gone . . . just lost.

He would find it, searching many, many more years until his body died. He would recognize that water because it was part of him—he would *know*.

The waitress set up a glass. "Help you, sir?"

Bonaro held out the sponge hopefully. THE END

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IT, Out of Darkest Jungle

By GORDON R. DICKSON

Seen any science fiction movies lately?

No? Well, don't bother going to one.

This script has everything.

Screen treatment of an original story idea by Joe Charlesville

CAST OF CHARACTERS

'IT'	SCIENCE FICTION MONSTER	Spine-chilling, monstrous, white ape with blood-red face.
JOE CHANNION	RESEARCH CHEMIST	Age twenty-eight, full of character, handsome, a scientific type with glasses.
NORA WINTERS	JOE'S ASSISTANT	Age twenty-two, tall, beautiful, sensitive, understanding.
POOTIE (PATRICIA) LATIMER	JOE'S NEICE	Age seven, golden-haired child.
DR. SVEN SODERUP	ARCHAEOLOGIST	Age 64, white-haired, frail, scholarly.

TRUCK DRIVER, SHERIFF, ETC.—*minor characters.*

SCIENTIFIC NOTE: Recent research has indicated that the Greeks (ancient) did not simply ignore headaches as was formerly thought, but that they may have possessed a medication unknown to present day medical science. This has given rise to well-founded scientific

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speculation that, lost in the depths of time, in prehistory, there may have existed a wizard master race with a knowledge of chemistry and medicine unknown to present-day scientists. In the words of Dr. Baker Terril, MIT ". . . maybe they had a super-aspirin." It is on this thesis that the following science fiction story idea is based.

Scene 1—Ruins of an oriental-looking ancient city, half-excavated from the jungle.

WE OPEN WITH AN AERIAL VIEW, PANNING DOWN AND INTO ONE OF THE EXCAVATED BUILDINGS. THE ROOM WE ENTER IS STILL HALF-FULL OF DIRT. THE EXCAVATED HALF SHOWS BENCHES AND TABLES ON WHICH SIT CURIOUSLY SCIENTIFIC-LOOKING INSTRUMENTS OF GLASS AND POTTERY. IN THE OTHER HALF, A NATIVE LABORER IS SINGING TO HIMSELF AS HE EXCAVATES SOMETHING LARGE AND WHITE, WHICH WE SEE IS THE BODY OF A HUGE WHITE APE WITH A BLOOD-RED FACE.

LABORER, SUDDENLY REALIZING WHAT IT IS HE IS EXCAVATING, GASPS AND DROPS HIS SHOVEL.

AS HE STARES HORRIFIED, THE APPARENTLY MUMMIFIED APE SLOWLY OPENS ONE EYE AND WINKS AT HIM.

THE LABORER'S FACE SUDDENLY CHANGES TO A MASK OF HORROR. HE MAKES A MOVEMENT AS IF HE WILL TURN TO FLEE. BUT THE GREAT, WHITE, APE-LIKE FIGURE REACHES OUT WITH ONE HAND, GRASPS HIM BY THE THROAT AND STRANGLES HIM. HIS DEAD BODY DROPS WITHOUT A SOUND TO THE FLOOR. THE APE, WHO IS—'IT', OUT OF DARKEST JUNGLE —CLOSES HIS EYE AND GOES MOTIONLESS AND APPARENTLY MUMMIFIED ONCE MORE.

A MOMENT LATER, DR. SODERUP ENTERS THE ROOM. FOR A MOMENT HE DOES NOT SEE THE BODY OF THE LABORER. THEN HE DOES AND COMES FORWARD TO BEND OVER IT, SHOCK WRITTEN ON HIS FACE.

DR. SODERUP

What could have killed him in that horrible fashion?

HE NOTICES THE BODY OF THE APE, WITH ITS ARM STILL OUTSTRETCHED ABOVE THE THROAT OF THE DEAD MAN. FOR A MOMENT HE FROWNS, AND THEN SHAKES HIS HEAD.

No, no. Obviously this creature has been dead for many thousands of years. I am imagining things—and who can blame me? Forty-two months in this murderous jungle—the heat—the insects—.

HE BENDS HIS ATTENTION ON THE APE BODY AND HIS EYES LIGHT UP.

But this is a priceless find. Who knows what an examination of this body may not teach us? I must get it back to my laboratory in Muncie, Indiana. DISSOLVE.

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Scene 2—A modern-looking concrete laboratory next to a flimsy-looking ancient wood house somewhere in the Kentucky hills.

WE LOOK DOWN ON THE PLACE FROM THE SURROUNDING, WOODED HILLS. A DIRT ROAD LOOPS BY BEFORE THE TWO BUILDINGS AND A FRONT YARD IN WHICH IS AN ANCIENT WELL, AND A HUGE, ANCIENT HALF-BURIED GRANITE BOULDER WEIGHING MANY TONS. WE MOVE DOWN AND IN A WINDOW OF THE LABORATORY. IT IS OBVIOUSLY A PLACE WHERE A CHEMIST WORKS. BENCHES ARE COVERED WITH GLASSWARE IN STRANGE SHAPES AND A RETORT FULL OF DARK LIQUID IS BUBBLING MYSTERIOUSLY.

YOUNG DR. JOE CHANNION SITS DISCONSOLATE ON A STOOL BESIDE A RACK FULL OF HALF-FILLED TEST TUBES. NORA BESIDE HIM, STANDING.

JOE

Another failure!

NORA

Don't say that, Doctor. You will succeed. I know you will.

NORA TRIES TO COMFORT HIM, BUT SHE HAS LITTLE SUCCESS. THOUGH CLEAN-SHAVEN AND NEAT IN HIS WHITE LABORATORY COAT, HE IS HOLLOW-EYED WITH EXHAUSTION AND DEPRESSED. NORA SUGGESTS THAT HE TAKE THE NIGHT OFF AND FORGET HIS WORK. THEY COULD DRIVE INTO TOWN FOR DINNER AND DANCING. BUT JOE WAVES THE SUGGESTION LISTLESSLY ASIDE. THOUGH NORA HAS BEEN HIS ASSISTANT FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND HAS FALLEN DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH HIM, HE HIMSELF HAS NEVER TAKEN A SQUARE LOOK AT HER AND DOES NOT REALIZE HOW BEAUTIFUL AND DESIRABLE SHE IS.

JOE

No, it's no use. I was a fool to throw up my research grant, build this laboratory here and try to go ahead on my own.

NORA

You were not. (Fiercely) The fools were the regents and the other chemists at the University who lacked your faith in Aspirin-X.

JOE

(Shaking his head) No. Maybe they were right, and I was wrong. Maybe I just let myself be carried away, following that accident in which my sister and her husband were fatally injured, and I thought how different it might have been if Aspirin-X had been available to save them. (He sighs)

When they died and Pootie was orphaned, I must have lost my head. It was one thing to bury myself up here in these hills, but to bury you and Pootie—

HE BREAKS OFF, FOR POOTIE, WEARING AN APRON, HAS JUST ENTERED THE LAB.

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POOTIE

Uncle Joe, I made lunch for you and Nora. It's all ready.

JOE

(Deeply touched) Did you, Pootie! How can I lose faith myself when you two have such faith in me. Well, let's have lunch, and then back to experiment number three thousand four hundred and ninety-six.

PRETENDING CHEERFULNESS, HE STRIDES OUT OF THE ROOM. EXCHANGING A GLANCE FULL OF FEMININE SYMPATHY, THE WOMAN AND THE TENDER-EYED GIRL CHILD HURRY AFTER HIM.

Scene 3—Several miles up the road from the lab.

AERIAL VIEW OF THE ROAD AS IT DIPS THROUGH A SMALL VALLEY AND THEN CLIMBS UP A RIDGE JUST BEYOND THE RIDGE THAT OVERLOOKS THE LABORATORY. A WHITE PANEL TRUCK COMES INTO VIEW, DRIVES DOWN INTO THE HOLLOW AND THEN SLOWLY MOUNTS THE RIDGE, APPROACHING AS IT DOES, UNTIL WE ARE ABLE TO SEE THE FACE OF THE TRUCK DRIVER.

TRUCK DRIVER

(Muttering to himself) This ain't the right way! How'd I get onto this back road, anyhow? I'll never make it up into Indiana and Muncie, tonight. How'd I get here, anyway?

HE SHAKES HIS HEAD LIKE SOMEONE WHO HAS JUST BEEN DAZED BY A BLOW.

—Now, I remember. There was that turnoff back on Route 49. I wasn't going to leave the highway and then this here compulsion sort of takes hold of me . . .

HE SHAKES HIS HEAD FIRMLY, AND BEGINS TO APPLY THE BRAKES.

I ain't going any farther. I'm just getting loster and loster.

HE THROWS AN UNEASY GLANCE OVER HIS SHOULDER AT THE SHEET METAL PARTITION BEHIND HIM WALLING OFF THE BACK OF THE TRUCK FROM HIS CAB.

Driving that big old ape mummy gives me the creeps. Whyn't they let things like that stay buried? I—

AS HE HALTS THE CAR, THE SHEET METAL PARTITION BEHIND HIM RIPS AS IF IT WAS CARDBOARD. JERKING AROUND, HE SEES A HUGE, BLOOD-RED APE FACE FRAMED IN THE TORN OPENING. IT WINKS AT HIM. THEN A HUGE WHITE ARM COMES THROUGH THE OPENING, GRASPS HIM BY THE THROAT AND BEGINS TO STRANGLE HIM AS HE FIGHTS FUTILEY AGAINST ITS GRIP.

DISSOLVE.

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IN THE CURVING DRIVEWAY THAT ENTERS THE YARD BEFORE THE LAB AND THE FLIMSY WOODEN HOUSE. A COUNTY SHERIFF'S POLICE CAR IS PARKED IN THE DRIVEWAY AND A UNIFORMED SHERIFF IS STANDING OUTSIDE IT, SPEAKING TO JOE.

SHERIFF

. . . I'm sorry, Doc. But the law's the law. I had to serve you with that there warrant and if you can't produce the money you owe by court time, Monday, the judge'll issue the foreclosure order and I'll have to take over your property here.

JOE

But don't you realize, Sheriff? This will put an end to my researches—an end to my last chance to give Aspirin-X to a world racked with disease and suffering. And there's this feeling I have —this feeling that I'm so close.

HE GRASPS THE SHERIFF PLEADINGLY BY THE OVERALL SUSPENDERS. THE SHERIFF ENDURES IT STOLIDLY, BUT WITH A HNIT OF PITY IN HIS TACITURN COUNTRY EYES.

If you could just have seen experiment number three thousand, four hundred and ninety-six—just now. The precipitate I got from it was just a shade off, almost pure white. I'm sure I've almost got it . . . somehow it's right there under my fingers if I could just see it.

HE RELEASES THE SHERIFF AND PASSES A HAND SHAKILY ACROSS HIS BROW, STAGGERING A BIT WITH WEARINESS.

—Just one more day. Sheriff . . .

SHERIFF

Sorry, young feller. If it was up to me—but it ain't. I got my duty to do. Noon tomorrow.

HE TURNS, GETS IN HIS POLICE CAR AND LEAVES. JOE TURNS AROUND AND WALKS SLOWLY AND HEAVILY BACK INTO THE LAB.

WE WATCH THE PASSAGE OF TIME IN SPEEDED-UP FASHION. THE SUN SINKS IN THE WEST. THE SCENE GROWS DARK AND LIGHTS GO ON IN THE LAB AND IN THE HOUSE. THE MOON RISES.

AS THE MOON CLIMBS HIGH IN THE SKY AND ILLUMINATES THE SCENE, WE SEE A WHITE PANEL TRUCK ROLL SILENTLY OUT FROM THE SHADOW OF THE TREES HIDING THE ROAD, AND TURN INTO THE YARD. IT STOPS BEHIND THE SPOT WHERE THE SHERIFF'S POLICE CAR HAD BEEN PARKED. NO ONE GETS OUT.

Scene 4—Interior of Joe's lab. The morning sun shines in at the windows.

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WE DISCOVER JOE WITH HIS HEAD ON HIS ARMS, FALLEN ASLEEP AT HIS EXPERIMENTING. THE VOICE OF NORA IS HEARD.

NORA

Joe!—*Joe!*

THE DOOR OF THE LAB OPENS AND NORA COMES IN, BEARING A POT OF STEAMING COFFEE AND TWO CUPS. AT THE SIGHT OF JOE, SHE RUNS TO HIM, PUTS DOWN THE COFFEE AND CUPS AND IS ABOUT TO THROW HER ARMS AROUND HIM WHEN JOE WAKES UP.

JOE

What . . . what's that? Oh, it's you Nora. I must have fallen asleep. Let's see . . . now for experiment number—

NORA

(Fiercely) You can't go on like this. You're killing yourself, Joe. No food, no sleep—working night and day. It isn't worth it—even Aspirin-X isn't worth it.

JOE

Don't say that, Nora. It is worth it—

HE POUNDS HIS FIST FIERCELY UPON THE LABORATORY TABLE.

It *must* be worth it! I can't lose faith, whatever happens. Where would the world have been if Lister had lost faith? Or Pasteur? Or Dr. and Madame Curie? No, no, I must go on . . .

NORA

At least take time to drink a cup of coffee. For my sa—I mean, for the sake of the work.

JOE

(Smiling a weary, gentle smile) Very well. One cup of coffee.

NORA POURS THEM EACH A CUP OF COFFEE AND THEY SIT, DRINKING. AS THEY SIT, THEY CHAT, AND JOE TELLS HER OF HIS NIGHT'S WORK IN THE LABORATORY.

JOE

Somehow I can't get the pure, white precipitate I know I'm after. I keep getting precipitates with a slight shade of off-white.

HE WAVES AT A LARGE BLACKBOARD SET UP NEAR HIS LABORATORY TABLE. THE SURFACE OF THE BLACKBOARD IS COVERED WITH FIGURES AND EQUATIONS MADE UP OF SCIENTIFIC TYPE SYMBOLS.

I've gone over my calculations a thousand times, and I keep getting the same answer. One of my factors in the essential equation is somehow wrong. But which? Until I can discover that, the chemical formulas I derive from the equation will never be the correct formula for Aspirin-X, which should be recognized by its glistening white color—

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NORA

(Suddenly remembering) Oh, that reminds me. Do you know anything about a white panel truck? There was one in the front yard when I came out this morning to bring you this coffee.

JOE

(Puzzled) A white panel truck? No. Let's go see.

THEY GO OUT OF THE LAB AND APPROACH THE WHITE PANEL TRUCK. FIRST THEY LOOK INTO THE CAB OF THE VEHICLE.

NORA

No one here. Strange. Somebody must have driven it.

JOE

Let's look in the back.

HE GOES AROUND AND OPENS THE BACK DOORS OF THE PANEL TRUCK. NORA SCREAMS—FOR THE BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE TRUCK DRIVER COMES TUMBLING OUT ONTO THE GROUND.

NORA THROWS HERSELF INTO JOE'S ARMS, AND JOE PUTS HIS ARMS AUTOMATICALLY AROUND HER.

NORA

(Shuddering) Oh, how horrible!

JOE

It's all right . . .

SUDDENLY SELF-CONSCIOUS, THEY BREAK APART. WE MOVE IN ON JOE'S FACE AND THE CAMERA CATCHES THE DAWNING WONDER IN HIS EYES. FOR THE FIRST TIME HE IS LOOKING ON HER AS A WOMAN, AND REMEMBERING WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO HAVE HIS ARMS AROUND HER. ABSENT-MINDEDLY, HE REMOVES HIS GLASSES AS IF TO SEE HER BETTER—AND THE CLEAR EARLY MORNING LIGHT, STRIKING ACROSS HIS FEATURES, REVEALS A RUGGEDNESS IN THEM THAT THE GLASSES HAVE HIDDEN UNTIL NOW.

ON HER PART, NORA HAS DROPPED HER EYES AND TURNED A LITTLE AWAY—HER SURE FEMININE INSTINCT, WE SEE, HAS APPRISED HER OF JOE'S SUDDEN AWAKENING TO HER EXISTENCE AS A WOMAN.

BEFORE EITHER OF THEM CAN SAY ANYTHING, HOWEVER, A BATTERED SAFARI TRUCK, POSSIBLY A LAND ROVER, JOLTS DOWN THE ROAD AND INTO THE YARD.

DR. SODERUP, DRESSED IN AN ORDINARY SUIT, BUT WITH SOME ABSENT MINDED TOUCH, LIKE A WIDE-AWAKE HAT—OR PERHAPS JUST WEARING SLACKS AND A BUSH JACKET . . . SOMETHING TO REMIND US OF HIS YEARS IN THE JUNGLE—JUMPS DOWN FROM THE WHEEL OF THE TRUCK AND RUNS TO BEND OVER AND EXAMINE THE BODY OF THE STRANGLED TRUCK DRIVER.

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SODERUP

(Tragically) Just as I feared! Why didn't I trust my instincts that day on the excavations site when I saw that poor dead man, there. When the panel truck didn't show up in Muncie on schedule, I knew something like this must have happened.

JOE

(Approaching with Nora) Then this is your panel truck? (blinking at Soderup) Say, aren't you Doctor Sven Soderup? I remember reading about your excavation of the Mayan ruins at Tulum in Quintna Roo, when I was in high school. It's an honor to meet you, Doctor!

SODERUP

(Staring at Joe, in turn) But you must be Dr. Joseph Channion, the brilliant young chemist whose work with the salicylates was being so highly praised at Mid-Continent University the last time I was there. What are you doing out here in the Kentucky hills, Doctor?

JOE

I gave up my research grant to continue work on my own. But you —what are you doing here, Doctor? And how did this pickup truck of yours get here?

SODERUP

It was undoubtedly driven here by its driver, whom I had employed to bring to Muncie, Indiana, a huge, apelike figure recently excavated by me from some jungle ruins. But the driver, I see, is dead and the rear of the truck empty. There's no doubt that It has escaped.

NORA

(Gasping) It?

SODERUP

(Solemnly) The huge, ape-like creature I excavated. Fantastic as this may seem to you, I now firmly believe that in spite of Its apparently mummified condition, the result of being buried for thousands of years It still possesses a sort of hideous life force.

NORA

But—but—such a thing is impossible.

JOE

(Thoughtfully) Hum . . . No, Nora. Under certain special organo-chemical conditions, such a thing might be entirely possible. In fact, Doctor, you have given me a ray of hope—

NORA SUDDENLY INTERRUPTS HIM BY SCREAMING.

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NORA

(Suddenly terror-stricken) Then It must have fled from this truck into the woods surrounding us! It must be hiding in there right now!

JOE

But, Nora, I hardly think It will come out in the daylight. (Becoming suddenly thoughtful again) Unless some special need should be drawing It to my lab—

NORA

(Breathlessly) But you don't understand! Today is Monday and Pootie found herself short of clothespins to hang the washing. Just an hour ago she went off to the small general store on the other side of the ridge to buy two dozen more!

JOE

But going down the road in broad daylight she should be safe— (He breaks off suddenly) Nora! you don't mean to tell me she took the ridge trail!

SODERUP

What's the matter, Doctor? What's wrong with this—what did you call it—ridge trail?

JOE

(Desperately) It's a shortcut over the ridge to the general store. But not only does it go through thick woods inhabited by a local pack of wild bears, but it also runs by Old Bottomless—a local muskeg swamp in which cattle are always being lost, swallowed up without a trace. —And now It is loose in those woods as well. I must go after her!

SODERUP

I will go with you. I have my elephant gun in the Land Rover. I'll get it.

JOE

If I'm correct in my hunch about it, no elephant gun will stop it. Besides, Doctor, I want you to stay here and protect Nora. Just a minute—

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS JOE AS HE TURNS AND DASHES BACK INTO THE LAB. WE SEE HIM SNATCH UP TWO ENORMOUS HYPODERMIC SYRINGES, AND FILL THEM BOTH, HASTILY, FROM A FLASK OF COLORLESS LIQUID. HE RUNS BACK OUTSIDE, CARRYING THE HYPODERMICS.

(To Nora) Here! (He gives her one of the syringes) Hang on to this. In the chance that you should be cornered by It, inject It with this. It's the barbiturate thiopentone, which given as a large in-

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tracardiac injection will cause permanent cessation of respiration in one to two seconds. I had it around to test the effectiveness of Aspirin-X, once I had produced it in pure form. Now, I will go after Pootie.

CARRYING THE OTHER HYPODERMIC, HE DASHES OFF. THE WOODS SWALLOW HIM UP. DISSOLVE.

Scene 5—The ridge trail, not far from the lab.

POOTIE COMES INTO VIEW, SKIPPING ALONG, SINGING, CARRYING A BROWN PAPER BAG CONTAINING TWO DOZEN CLOTHESPINS. THE CAMERA PANS PAST HER INTO THE WOODS. WE SEE WHAT SHE DOES NOT NOTICE —THE HIDEOUS, BLOOD-RED FACE OF IT, STARING THROUGH THE BRUSH AT HER. IT IS IT, OUT OF DARKEST JUNGLE, MOVING PARALLEL WITH HER PATH THROUGH THE WOODS. THE TRAIL GOES AROUND A CURVE AND COMES OUT BESIDE AN AREA OF BUBBLING MUCK WITH A FEW TUFTS OF GRASS GROWING AMID HALF-SUNKEN LOGS, ETC.

POOTIE

(Pausing to look at it) There it is, Old Bottomless Swamp. I wonder if it's really bottomless the way people around here, think—

A DEEP, GROWLING ROAR INTERRUPTS HER. SHE SCREAMS, AND TURNS AROUND TO SEE A PACK OF HUGE BLACK BEARS LUMBERING OUT OF THE WOOD AND BEARING DOWN ON HER. SHE TURNS AND BEGINS TO RUN AWAY ALONG THE TRAIL TOWARD THE HOUSE AND THE LAB THAT ARE SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.

IT, OUT OF DARKEST JUNGLE, SUDDENLY BREAKS OUT OF THE WOODS BEFORE HER TO BLOCK HER PATH. SHE SCREAMS AGAIN AND RUNS OFF INTO THE WOODS AT HER RIGHT.

THE PACK OF HUGE BEARS, GROWLING AND ROARING, SEE IT, AND CHARGE IT, INSTEAD. AND THE FIGHT COMMENCES.

SUCH A FIGHT WILL NEVER HAVE BEEN SEEN ON FILM BEFORE. IT AND THE HUGE PACK OF VORACIOUS BEARS FIGHT AMONG THE BRUSH, IN THE OPEN ON THE HILLSIDE AND ON THE MARGIN OF THE DEADLY SUCKING SWAMP. WHOLE TREES ARE TORN UP BY THEIR ROOTS. ROARS AND HOWLS FILL THE AIR. BLOOD IS EVERYWHERE.

FINALLY, IT DISPOSES OF THE LAST BEAR. TORN AND BLEEDING, IT DASHES OFF THE TRAIL INTO THE WOODS ON THE TRACK OF POOTIE.

DISSOLVE.

Scene 6—Back in front of the flimsy frame house and the lab.

POOTIE, HER DRESS TORN, BUT STILL CLUTCHING HER PAPER BAG OF CLOTHESPINS, COMES BURSTING OUT OF THE WOOD AND RUNS UP TO

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NORA AND DR. SODERUP, WHO ARE STANDING IN THE OPEN—DR. SODERUP HOLDING HIS HEAVY ELEPHANT GUN—WAITING FOR JOE TO RETURN.

IT, SNARLING AND ROARING, BREAKS OUT OF THE WOOD RIGHT BEHIND HER.

DR. SODERUP

(To Nora) Quick! Take the child! Get into the house and lock the door behind you. I'll take care of It.

NORA GRASPS POOTIE BY THE HAND AND THEY RUN UP TO AND IN THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR OF THE HOUSE. THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM AND WE SEE NORA LOCK THE FRONT DOOR. SHE AND POOTIE RUN TO PEER OUT THROUGH THE GLASS CURTAINS OF A TALL FRONT WINDOW.

THE CAMERA LOOKS OUT OVER THEIR SHOULDER. WE SEE DR. SODERUP DROP TO ONE KNEE AND EMPTY THE MAGAZINE OF HIS ELEPHANT GUN AT THE ONCOMING IT.

FOR A MOMENT IT IS CHECKED AS THE HEAVY SLUGS HAMMER INTO IT'S CHEST, ALMOST KNOCKING IT BACKWARD. IT ROARS WITH PAIN AND RAGE. FURIOUS, IT TEARS UP OUT OF THE GROUND THE HUGE BOULDER IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE AND CRUSHES THE PANEL TRUCK WITH IT. THEN IT WINKS HORRIBLY, COMES ON AND GRASPS DR. SODERUP BY THE THROAT. WE SEE HIM SLOWLY STRANGLED.

THEN IT ADVANCES ON THE HOUSE.

NORA AND POOTIE BACK AWAY ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM, TREMBLING. WITH ONE BLOW OF HIS FIST, IT SMASHES THE DOOR FROM ITS HINGES AND ENTERS.

NORA AND POOTIE RUN INTO THE DINING ROOM. LOCKING THAT DOOR BEHIND THEM. IT PURSUES AND SMASHES THROUGH THE DOOR.

IT CONTINUES TO PURSUE THEM FROM ROOM TO ROOM, BREAKING DOWN THE DOORS THEY LOCK BEHIND THEM.

FINALLY THEY ARE IN THE LAST ROOM, THE PANTRY OF THE HOUSE. NORA SWINGS THE DOOR TO, BEHIND THEM, THEN DISCOVERS THAT THIS DOOR HAS NOTHING BUT A HASP FITTING OVER A STAPLE, WITH NO BOLT TO GO THROUGH IT.

NORA

(Almost sobbing) There's nothing to lock it with.

POOTIE

(Whipping one of her clothespins out of the paper bag she still holds) Here, Aunt Nora, try this!

NORA SNATCHES THE CLOTHES PIN AND STICKS IT THROUGH THE STAPLE TO LOCK THE DOOR JUST IN TIME.

THEY HEAR IT APPROACH THE DOOR. IT THROWS ITS WEIGHT AGAINST IT. THEY CRINGE.

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IT BEGINS TO SNARL AND BEAT ON THE DOOR. THE CLOTHESPIN HOLDS BUT WE BEGIN TO SEE FINE CRACKS APPEAR—IN THE UPPER PANEL OF THE DOOR.

POOTIE

(All but weeping) Oh, where is uncle Joe?

NORA

(Putting her arms around the little girl) Maybe the door will hold . . .

DISSOLVE.

Scene 7—Joe, carrying his hypodermic syringe, at the point in the woods where Pootie left the trail.

JOE

She's headed home. Her tracks are plain.—But so are these others, that must be the tracks of It. It must have been right behind her.

HE DASHES OFF ALONG THE DOUBLE TRAIL OF TRACKS TOWARD THE HOUSE AND THE LAB. CUT.

Scene 8—Back in the pantry at the house.

THE PANTRY DOOR IS FINALLY GIVING TO THE POUNDING OF IT. A HUGE WHITE FIST COMES THROUGH THE UPPER PANEL. THE WOOD DISSOLVES. A BLOOD-RED FACE LOOKS THROUGH AND WINKS AT NORA AND POOTIE.

A FEW MORE BLOWS SMASH AN OPENING THROUGH WHICH IT CAN ENTER. IT APPROACHES THE WOMAN AND THE GIRL, WHO SHRINK BACK AND BACK UNTIL THEY ARE AGAINST THE WALL AND CAN RETREAT NO FURTHER.

CAMERA CUTS TO LOOK AT IT FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW. WE SEE IT SLOWLY STUMPING FORWARD, LOOMING HORRIBLY AND MONSTROUSLY ABOVE THEM. A STRANGE, PLEADING EXPRESSION CROSSES HIS BLOOD RED FACE.

NORA

(Driving the hypodermic needle into It's chest in the region of It's heart) *There!*

IT

(Roaring in rage and pain as the deadly poison is pumped into It's heart) Aaaaaarrrg!

IT STAGGERS BACK. WITH A SPASMODIC EFFORT, IT RIPS OUT THE HYPODERMIC SYRINGE THAT IS STICKING IN ITS CHEST AND THROWS IT AWAY. TURNING, IT LURCHES, STAGGERING OUT THROUGH THE RUINED ROOMS, OUT OF THE HOUSE AND OVER AND INTO THE LAB NEXT DOOR.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS IT.

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IN THE LAB WE SEE IT TUCK JOE'S BLACKBOARD UNDER ONE ARM, AND THEN SWEEP UP INTO BOTH ITS ARMS AN ASSORTMENT OF LAB GLASSWARE AND CHEMICALS.

HOLDING THESE, IT LURCHES BACK OUT OF THE LAB AND STAGGERS OFF INTO THE WOODS, AS NORA AND POOTIE COME OUT OF THE RUINED HOUSE IN TIME TO SEE IT DISAPPEAR.

AT THE SAME MOMENT, JUST AS IT IS DISAPPEARING, JOE BURSTS FROM THE EDGE OF THE WOOD NOT FAR AWAY AND A TRUCK DRIVES INTO THE YARD. THE TRUCK IS LOADED WITH THE SHERIFF AND A DOZEN OR MORE SHOTGUN CARRYING DEPUTIES. THEY, LIKE JOE, SEE IT DISAPPEAR.

SHERIFF

(Leading his deputies and descending from the truck, speaks to Joe as Joe comes up) We heard there was a dangerous jungle animal loose around here. That must be it.

JOE

(Solemnly) It is no mere jungle animal, Sheriff. But I think I know where we can find It. Follow me.

HE LEADS THE WAY INTO THE WOODS. NORA AND POOTIE FOLLOW. BEHIND THEM ARE THE SHERIFF AND HIS DEPUTIES, HANGING BACK FEARFULLY, BUT ALSO FOLLOWING.

CUT.

Scene 8—A little deeper in the woods, almost to Old Bottomless Swamp.

WE SEE IT, REELING AND STAGGERING THROUGH THE WOODS, THE BLACKBOARD UNDER ONE ARM, FRANTICALLY GROANING AND MIXING THE CHEMICALS IT HOLDS IN ITS HANDS. THE BIG TEST TUBE IN ITS RIGHT HAND IS FIZZING AND CHANGING COLOR.

IT BREAKS OUT OF THE WOODS ONTO THE EDGE OF OLD BOTTOMLESS. INTENT ON ITS CHEMICALS-MIXING, IT STEPS OFF THE EDGE, BLUNDERING INTO THE MUSKEG, BEFORE IT REALIZES WHERE IT IS GOING.

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, IT BEGINS TO SINK.

ROARING, IT THRASHES AROUND, SINKING, BUT MANAGES TO TURN ITSELF SO THAT IT FACES THE EDGE OF THE SWAMP ONLY A YARD OR SO AWAY. SEEING IT IS STILL SINKING, IN SPITE OF ALL IT CAN DO, IT GOES FRANTICALLY BACK TO ITS MIXING.

JOE, WITH POOTIE AND NORA, AND FOLLOWED BY THE SHERIFF WITH HIS DEPUTIES, EMERGE FROM THE WOOD AND APPROACH THE SWAMP. THEY HALT ON THE EDGE OF THE MUSKEG IN WHICH IT IS TRAPPED.

JOE

(To the Sheriff) Quick, we must try to pull it out.

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SHERIFF

(Shaking his head) We can't. No rope. And you won't get any man in these here parts even as close to the edge of Old Bottomless as you're standing right now.

IT

(Roaring) Aaaaarrrg!

IT IS UP TO THE NECK NOW, AND QUICKLY GOING DOWN OUT OF SIGHT. JOE SPINS ABOUT AND FOR A MOMENT THE CAMERA CUTS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN HIS FACE AND THE BLOOD-RED FEATURES OF IT. A LOOK OF STRANGE UNDERSTANDING SEEMS TO PASS BETWEEN THEM.

THEN IT, JUST AS THE SWAMP IS ABOUT TO CLOSE OVER ITS HEAD, WINKS AT JOE AND REACHES OUT TO PASS THE TEST TUBE IN HIS HAND TO JOE.

JOE TAKES IT. HE STARES AT IT. HE GIVES AN EXCLAMATION OF SURPRISE. IT DISAPPEARS UNDER THE SURFACE OF THE SWAMP WITH A HORRIBLE BUBBLING SOUND.

BUT A MOMENT LATER, ONE LONG ARM EMERGES FOR A SECOND TO PASS THE BLACKBOARD OUT TO JOE.

JOE TAKES THIS, TOO AND EXCLAIMS AGAIN.

NORA

Oh, Joe! What is it?

JOE

(Excitedly, showing the contents of the test tube to Nora) White! Pure white! See it?

NORA STARES, AND GASPS.

NORA

Joe! You mean—(She dares not say it)

JOE

(Happily) Yes! That's what it is! Aspirin-X.

HE STARES, OVERJOYED AT NORA AND POOTIE.

It had the answer all the time. How else could It have survived those thousand years of being buried? In the days of It's ancient culture, Aspirin-X must have been as available as ordinary aspirin is now! When It was excavated, It realized It needed more of this miracle drug. Some strange, forgotten sense must have drawn It to my laboratory—the one place on Earth where the materials for Aspirin-X were available.

NORA

But why didn't It just ask us—

JOE

Did we ever really give It a chance? No, from the beginning we treated it like a scientific specimen, an artifact. It was alone in this

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younger world of beings who did not understand It—who feared It because it was different.

CAMERA CUTS TO SHOW JOE'S FACE IN CLOSEUP. THERE IS A NOBLE SADNESS IN HIS EYES.

Naturally, It had to fight for existence the best way It could. But in It there was perhaps the spark of a humanity greater than our own. Didn't Pootie say that It came to her rescue when the pack of savage bears came after her at this very spot? Then, when It followed after her—possibly to find out if she was all right—It was greeted by gunfire from Dr. Soderup. Possibly It was still trying to explain itself when you pumped it full of thiopentone.

POOTIE

Why didn't that kill It right then, Uncle Joe?

JOE

It would have, sweetheart, if It hadn't been permeated by the Aspirin-X It had used during It's ancient lifetime. As it was, the Aspirin-X slowed the action of the poison so that It should have had time to make more Aspirin-X to cure itself completely.—Which was what It was doing when, running away from us, It stumbled into the swamp here. But still, It passed me the completed Aspirin-X as It sank, that the secret might not be lost to the world, though it was too late to save It, Itself.

SHERIFF

(To Joe) Taking a lot for granted, aren't you, son? Might've been sheer chance that critter put the right stuff together to get your Aspirin-X.

JOE

(In ringing tones) Chance? Never!

HOLDING THE BLACKBOARD IN ONE HAND, WITH THE OTHER HE SWEEPS DIRT FROM THE SURFACE OF THE BOARD, REVEALING THE SYMBOLS CHALKED UNDERNEATH. HE POINTS TO A SYMBOL THAT HAS BEEN ERASED AND REPLACED WITH ANOTHER SYMBOL PLAINLY DRAWN BY A DIFFERENT HAND.

See there! There's where I went wrong in my calculations. It corrected them for me, and It's last act was to pass me the blackboard that the knowledge would not be lost. Yes . . .

HE PUTS THE ARM STILL HOLDING THE BLACKBOARD AROUND NORA AND HIS OTHER ARM AROUND POOTIE. THEY ALL TURN AND GAZE AT THE SWAMP WHERE IT HAS DISAPPEARED. AS HE SPEAKS THE CAMERA PANS DOWN AND AWAY FROM THEM OUT OVER THE AREA OF MUCK IN WHICH IT WENT DOWN.

(*Continued on page 130*)

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They're Playing Our Song

By Harry Harrison

LOVE, love, love-lee love—my love's forgotten me-eee . . . !!"

stomp-stomp-stomp—

STOMP - STOMP - STOMP!! echoed through the cavernous Paramount as the thousands of teenagers stamped their feet in hysterical unison, drowning out the amplified efforts of the quartet on the stage, writhing and tearing at their guitars unheard but not unappreciated. Squealings and stampings shattered the air and more than one flat-chested thin-flanked and orgiastic young thing leaped in frenzy and collapsed unconscious in the aisle. The bored ushers—with ear plugs—dragged them onto the waiting stretchers and carried them out.

The closing number was The Spiders' top-hit-favorite, *Were My Pitying Heart To Break From Pitying You* and they hurled themselves into it with reckless abandon, black hair falling low over their foreheads, arms thrashing and hips rotating like epileptic marionettes. They ended with a flourish and their enamored audience had one last sight of them bowing as the curtains closed, and with love swelling their hearts hurled after them a final hoarse chorus of cries of worship. There had never been anything like it in the history of show business—well, there had been things like it—but The Spiders were surely the latest and best.

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You all know The Beetles? Er—We mean The Beatles. Well, meet The Spiders . . .

THEY were ushered down a back stairway and through an unmarked exit to avoid the press of autograph hounds at the stage door.

Their yellow Rolls-Royce spun them back to their hotel and the bowing manager personally showed them into the service elevator and up to their suite.

"Quickly!" he cozened. "Screams approach—they are coming down the hall." They pushed in hurriedly and Bingo locked the door just in time.

"That was close," Wango said, throwing his guitar onto the couch.

Then the door to one of the bedrooms burst open and at once four lank-haired, autograph-book clutching girls rushed out: they had bribed a chambermaid and lain there in concealment the entire day.

"Shall we?" Bingo asked.

"Sure," Lingo said and unbuttoned his coat.

The girls screamed even louder when they saw the many, hairy arms concealed there, and tried to flee. But the black suited figures lept with strange agility and arrow-sharp egg-laying ovipositors penetrated the quivering flesh.

Their heightened screams were drowned in the other screams from beyond the door:

"The Spiders! The Spiders!! We want THE SPIDERS!!"

THE END

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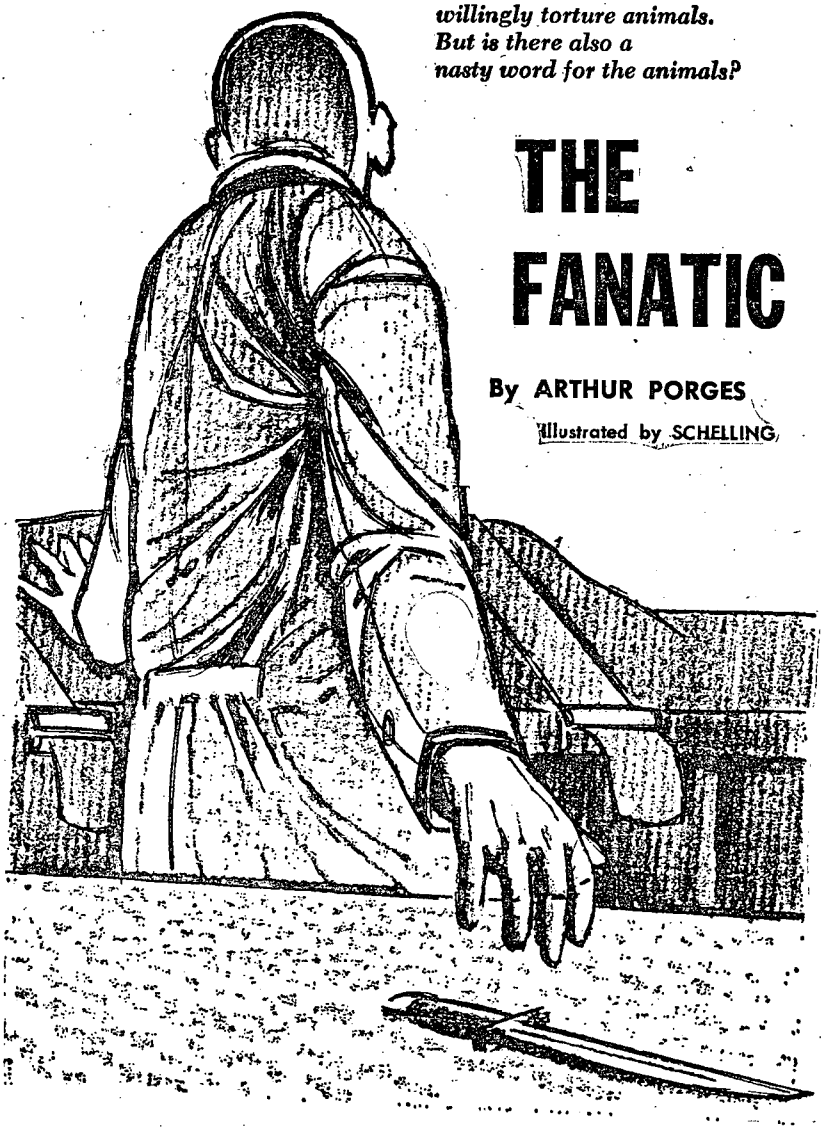
There's a nasty word for a man who will willingly torture animals. But is there also a nasty word for the animals?

THE FANATIC

By ARTHUR PORGES

Illustrated by SCHELLING



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THEY were lying on the knoll, a most incongruous couple in appearance—he so short, shaggy; untidy, and dark, with the hot intolerant eyes of a fanatic; and she, immaculate in her light summer frock, the ultimate in a cool, Nordic blonde.

The sun dipped below the horizon, allowing purple dusk to smoke up from the earth.

"Now you'll see," he muttered.

"If I didn't know better, I'd think you were serious."

"I am—damned serious. Serious enough to take steps, and soon." He gave her a puzzled scrutiny. "I thought you understood; that you weren't like those clods in the bar."

"But I was sure you were just seeing how much they'd swallow. I never dreamed—Jerry, you can't *mean* you really believe the things you said."

His pale eyes flared more hotly under their heavy brows.

"I might've known," he rasped. "What made me think a girl you pick up in a bar might have a few brains. Look, Eunice—"

"Men in bars can have brains, no matter how much they guzzle," she interrupted him. "But women are different, huh? It's not my brains that are in question, but yours, if you truly believe—"

"Skip it," he said. "Here they come now. Watch and learn something—if that one is still in there."

The bats were pouring out of the cave, millions of them it seemed, although an experienced observer would place the total under ten thousand. Still, as they came like dark smoke from the narrow opening, the sheer bulk of their flow was overwhelming in its effect on the eye, recalling the vast flights of passenger pigeons a hundred years earlier.

JERRY had his binoculars raised, and was studying the fringes of the horde. Suddenly he grasped the girl's arm, abstractedly aware of the firmness of her flesh; she's certainly quite a physical specimen, some inner part of his brain told him. Healthy as a horse—maybe a little dumber, which was disappointing, since he'd hoped there would be an ally at last . . .

"Look!" he cried. "On the right of the main crowd—that bunch of eight—no, nine. What do you see?"

He passed her the binoculars, but she waved them aside.

"I can see," she said calmly, her large blue eyes narrowing for a moment.

"Well?" he demanded impatiently. "Yes or no?"

"They're just bats, I suppose."

"Hell!" he snapped. "Why do I waste my time. I *told* you what to look for. Now they're out of range." He eyed her in a kind of disgust. "You mean to tell me

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you couldn't see the difference?"

"For heaven's sake, Jerry, I'm no expert! What do I know about bats? They were all flying up and down—"

"Like hell they were. One was soaring—like a hawk. This is the third time I've spotted it. Just a hair bigger; maybe a bit off-color; that doesn't matter. But bats don't soar—ever. Maybe that's because at night there aren't the updraughts day birds use; or maybe because they catch flying insects on the wing. But bats don't soar." He took out a fat, maroon-covered notebook, and checked something off. Then he closed it with an air of finality. "That's it. I have enough data. It's time to *do* something."

"What *is* this data—not those little things—"

"'These data'—the word is plural," he said irritably, only half listening. Then, angrily: "Little things! You weren't listening last night. Animals are very rigid in certain aspects of their behavior. When you see a dog that never circles before lying down; a pigeon that forgets to bob its head; a bat that soars, instead of flitting—"

"You're too wrapped up in this wild idea," she said. Then she put one hand on his arm in a rubbing, caressing motion, and added: "Don't you ever want to have any fun? Just enjoy yourself?"

He moodily pushed her fingers free, and said almost to himself: "Women are just like cats. When a guy has the time and the strongest urge, they have to wash their hair or visit their mother. But the minute he's up to his neck in something really important, then they begin to feel amorous. Once I clear up this business, Baby, you'll see—"

"I don't know why I waste so much time on you," she said plaintively. Then, in a coaxing voice: "Jerry, did you ever think of seeing a doctor?"

He grinned sourly.

"Why don't you say it? Psychiatrist; head-shrinker." He laughed in a harsh voice, without mirth. "And I don't know why I bother to wake people up. Any culture, no matter how alien, would be an improvement on what we've got. Maybe I don't like being suckered. Even if nobody else is wise to Them—"

"Oh, brother!" she exclaimed. "The old story. 'Them.'"

"I went at it wrong last time," he said, ignoring the remark. "I tried dissection, looking for different organs and things like that. But I'm not enough of a pathologist. And I couldn't get any help, damn it. I even tried sending rabbit's blood to a Public Health Office, asking for a tularemia check; I hoped they might spot something funny in the sample. But the clowns just reported negative on the tula-

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remia. If there was something, they missed it, naturally; you have to be prepared, and not just doing a routine job, I suppose."

"Isn't it possible," she demanded, "that lower animals have their morons and misfits, too?"

"Some, sure. But I've seen too many aberrations. And this time I've a better angle."

"What is it?"

"If I tell you, you'll want to go running to the cops or something," he said. There was a wistful tone in his voice. She sensed instantly that he still yearned for a confidant.

"I won't—I promise. Tell me."

WELL, let's assume some of these animals are not animals at all, as I've been saying, but spies of a sort. Don't ask me from where, but very intelligent. This way they can go anywhere, and study us; wild and domestic—both. I know it's like something from the corniest old science-fiction magazines; but truth is always essentially corny. All right; they're dedicated and clever; some—maybe most—will die rather than talk. But no society is free of weaklings. With enough stress—the right threat—some will break. The minute I get a cat or dog or squirrel—or a bat—to talk—in English, their little plan is blown sky-high, that's beyond question."

She gaped at him with those great blue eyes wide.

"You mean you're going to torture animals? Trying to make them *speak?*"

"I said you'd raise a fuss."

"Jerry, don't you see—this is a sickness, really."

"Sure, like Pasteur's, when he talked about germs; or Einstein's, when he said space was curved; or—"

"Those other animals—the ones you—you cut up. Where did you get them?"

"I told you I live in Redwood Canyon—in a shack, to be brutally frank. I haven't had time to make a decent living and still save the stupid human race. Anyhow, there are plenty of animals there: rabbits, gophers, deer, raccoons, ground squirrels, lizards, foxes, weasels—you name 'em. When I saw one that didn't seem normal—and I don't mean just a sick or off-colored specimen—I tried to trap or shoot it. I didn't get too far that way, and anyhow I was careless. Some nosy neighbors reported me, and I got fined and warned. It's the old story," he added bitterly. "The very people you're trying to help are the ones who crucify you every damned time. But now I know how to go about it, and when I'm through, I'll have evidence on tape and film that would convince anybody."

"And you honestly feel, now,

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that if you torture enough of these—these different little animals, you'll make one speak in English. And you'll get the words on tape, with pictures."

"Yes, I do," he said defiantly. He patted the notebook in his shirt pocket. "This tells me I'm right. Hundreds of cases. Cats that don't wash some parts of their bodies, because they can't manage the tricky stance a real cat knows from kittenhood. Cocks that fight, but never peck the ground at intervals. A mole that didn't bite off the heads of the worms it caught. I could go on for hours. Some were just different, I know; but you develop an instinct after a while—or a flair. Hundreds of biologists saw what Darwin did in his travels, but he was the only one to see the vital patterns. I see a vital pattern hidden in natural aberrations. I may be wrong, but I don't think so, and the stakes are very high. Unless the world is warned, this reconnaissance could be followed by a take-over in force. But if we're ready . . ."

SHE looked at him in silence, then shook her head in a pitying gesture.

"Doesn't it occur to you," she said, "that first of all such spies wouldn't let you trap them?"

"On the contrary. Not knowing my motives, they might hope for it—deliberately walk into the traps, in order to make inside observations on a human."

She was taken aback for a moment, then said: "On the other hand, if they are spies, invaders, won't they kill you if you're getting at their secret?"

"They might," he said coolly. "But I'm hoping that as spies, they won't carry arms; it would be risky if one were killed accidentally, by a car, say, and had some strange instrument on its body. They are here, I presume, primarily for information. I do run the risk that they can communicate over long distances; but doubt if that's so, or I'd have had trouble with the ones I captured or shot before. They'd have tipped off the others by now."

"You certainly have all the answers," she said in a dry voice. "And you mean to begin torturing all kinds of little animals."

Not all so little. I've seen deer that weren't deer; and a bear that passed up honey."

"Could I come by and watch?"

He was surprised, and showed it.

"Watch? But I thought—it's an unpleasant business; I don't deny that. I *must* do it, but you . . ." He broke off, and gave her a sharp stare. "Oh, no. Is the sadism coming out? After all those pious protests, you'd enjoy some blood and squeals. Get lost, lady; you and I don't speak the same language. Beat it—remember, I

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didn't pick you up; it was the other way around. Go away; you make me sick!"

She stood up, so tall, slim, and lovely, with that perfect Ice-Queen profile.

"You're very stupid and unfair; I hate you."

She strode off, walking like an empress.

"The people you run into," he said darkly. "Are these the characters I'm trying to save? And she so clean-looking and all—ah, t' hell with her. It's a sickness, I suppose. She can't help it; but not in my lab; bad enough I have to do the dirty work, without making a free show of it."

It was now quite dark. He got up stiffly, and walked to the jalopy. He half expected her to be sitting in it; the town was a long hike away. But she was gone. He called her name a few times, being unwilling to abandon her out here; but there was no reply. Finally he shrugged, and drove off.

THE next morning, Jerry steeled himself to begin what might turn out to be a long and rather revolting investigation. But just as another fanatic, John Brown, was able to slaughter innocent and guilty alike in his crusade against slavery, which to him was sufficient justification, so this one felt that the high stakes were proper enough grounds for the abuse of helpless animals.

There was just enough doubt in his own mind to make him begin with the most promising of his five captives. The mouse, somehow, however un-rodentlike its behavior, seemed less promising as a spy, although Jerry told himself this was foolish prejudice and the power of pre-conceived ideas. Similarly, the rabbit, with its tradition of Disney-cuteness, was almost too endearing a creature to torment. It would be unfair, however, to suggest that the one he chose to begin on—a young raccoon—was to be sacrificed because of its bandit-like appearance, complete with black mask. In a matter like this, Jerry knew very well, it was quite preposterous to judge by looks; the villainous and sly raccoon might be only a wayward member of its tribe, and the cute, bright-eyed mouse a spy-chief. Still, one had to begin somewhere.

With thick gloves, Jerry pulled the raccoon from the wire cage, and not without considerable difficulty, tied the struggling beast to a heavy table, well-fitted for the purpose with screw-eyes. It was not necessary, in the circumstances, to make the animal completely immobile as for a delicate operation, in which case an anesthetic would be used, anyhow. It was only necessary that the raccoon be unable to escape and so frustrate the experimenter.

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Then he lit the little butane welding torch, and approached the captive.

"I know you understand what I'm saying," he told the raccoon, "so it's no use pretending. Nothing will stop me from burning you alive, right on the table, unless you tell me, in English, just what you are, who sent you, and why—in detail. Now we understand each other, right?"

At the sound of his voice, the raccoon stopped its frantic lunges against the tough cords, and looked at him, eyes brightly feral. Then it resumed its struggles, breathing hoarsely and muttering deep in its throat.

"All right; it's your choice. We'll have to do it the hard way," Jerry said tonelessly, his forehead suddenly damp. "Maybe you don't know what fire feels like. Maybe on your planet accidents don't happen where people get burned badly. Maybe, even, in your real shape you don't feel pain—or can't feel it now. Maybe you'll pretend it hurts, but I have a way of knowing—which I don't intend to tell you. If you can't feel pain, I'll *know* I'm right, and push all the harder to break things wide open . . . But first things first."

HE adjusted the flame to a blue cone, and deftly flicked it across the raccoon's left ear. The animal snarled, and then gave a whimpering little cry. It shook its head several times; the ear wiggled feverishly.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Jerry asked. "That was just a tiny sample. When I hold the flame right against your body, it will be quite unbearable—if you really feel anything."

I must remember, he told himself; don't get too excited out of pity. While burning keep feeling for increased heartbeat and pulse; he won't know about hiding those, even if he pretends to be in agony. And if they show up, I'll know he's hurting badly, and may talk.

He was about to apply the flame to the raccoon's left foreleg, when the door opened behind him. He whirled, his heart sinking. If some damned nosy neighbor even caught him at this . . .!

"You!" he said. "I told you—"

"I had to come," Eunice said. She looked at the tied raccoon, her blue eyes flaming with indignation. "Oh, the poor little thing; it's just a cub!" She glared at Jerry. "Why that one?"

"If it matters to you, or you know the difference," he said, "this raccoon didn't wash its food—except when it knew I was watching. It's my number one suspect as of now. Better get out of here; you won't like the beginning; but when he talks, you'll owe me a fat apology."

"I won't go," she said.

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"I could throw you out."

"The door doesn't even have a lock," she said, giving the shack a contemptuous scrutiny.

"Stay if you like, but if you interfere, I warn you, I'll forget you're a girl, and knock you down if I have to."

He stepped up to the raccoon, and held the flame against the animal's leg. A shrill, almost human scream burst from the tortured beast.

"Did that sound like a raccoon to you?" he asked the girl. "By God, it was like nothing I've ever heard. What'll you bet—"

"How could it be normal, burning alive?" she demanded. "You must stop this, Jerry."

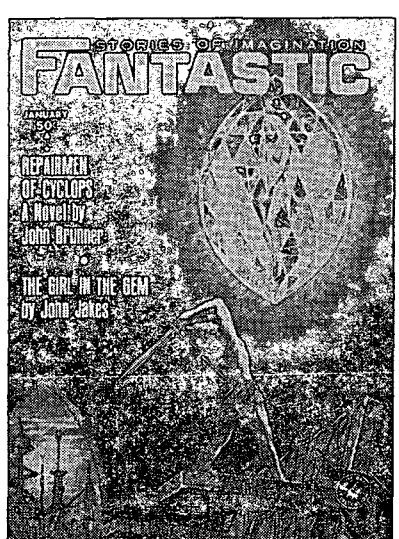
"No," he said flatly. "This should be the big break-through." And he advanced the torch again.

Then the raccoon spoke. Its voice, in contrast with its rascally appearance, was oddly soft and well modulated, but brightly and resonantly non-human.

"It's no use," the creature said. "I can't bear it. And anyhow, he's bound to be a problem."

"I agree," Eunice said, and gulping, Jerry spun on his heel to face the little automatic directed at his face.

"Not all of us are disguised as *lower* animals," the girl said. "You just had to keep pushing." Then she fired three shots into Jerry's head.



COMING NEXT MONTH

John Brunner's newest novel, Repairmen of Cyclops, is featured in the January, 1965, issue of FANTASTIC. Among its ingredients are: a missing planet, a jealous female dictator, a man who has had the same leg replaced twice, and the mysterious "Receivers of the Sick."

Also in the next issue, John Jakes creates an undersea adventure for Brak the Barbarian, whose assignment is to brave the perils of the drowned city and release The Girl in the Gem.

For these and other stories, be sure to get the January, 1965, issue of FANTASTIC, on sale at your newsdealer December 17.

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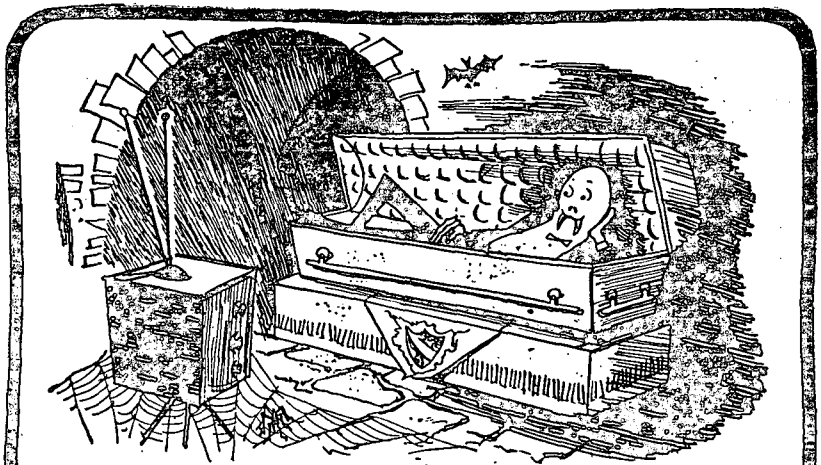

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Yuletide is the season for making merry, they say. Evidently nothing provides quite as much merriment as an Aldebaran thought-disrupter aimed by mistake at a Centauran spy masquerading as a Terran editor who is working with a new writer who is—oh, well, here's a plot worthy of P.G. Wodehouse at his wooziest. Have a . . .

Merry Christmas from Outer Space!

By CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

Illustrator SCHELLING

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:

Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:14

TO:

J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra

MESSAGE: March—I am sending, as soon as the Chute stabilizes, an improved-model thought-disruptor which you should find very useful in implementing our policy of frustrating and delaying the attempts of the Terrans in North America to make serious space progress.

Let me somewhat belatedly congratulate you on that beautiful job you did on the cameras in their previous moon-rocket. This equaled the job your opposite number in North Asia performed on the communications system of that planetary shot that went the distance — in silence.

Keep up the good work. The idea is to never let them know they are being sabotaged, but gradually make them so sick of the mounting expense and so weary of the unexplainable flops and failures, that they will voluntarily give up their space programs. The Fleet can't be everywhere at once and it is much

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easier to control isolated planets than it is to put them down after they start spreading out over the whole solar system.

You should find the new thought-disruptor highly useful. Full instructions will, of course, be included with it. My suggestion is that you plant it in some research installation governing their long range space-exploration program. The effect should be beautiful. —Yours in anticipation, Q. Sarul

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STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

7/1/64

Liz—

I have to be out of town for several days, but hope you will sift the incoming mail for anything that looks at all promising. We seem to be going through some kind of writer's drought. That, plus the heat, and the noise as the monster JPN Cybernetic Research outfit moves in next door, has made this the worst summer yet.

What's wrong with J. A. Catherton? Why don't we hear anything from him?

R. B. Jones
Editorial Director

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

7/1/64

R. B.—

I'll do my best; but if you can't squeeze anything usable out of this pile, I just can't make any promises.

J. A. Catherton's literary agent says Catherton made three successive sales to *Playboy*, and has now gone off to Bermuda. At last report, he was seen riding around the island in a carriage with three blondes.

The agent expects it will take Catherton two months to go through his money, and one month to recover. We therefore can't expect anything from him till sometime in October.

—Have a good trip.

Liz

—BY HYPERWARP—
2074B14

TO:
G12, Centauran High Command
04618 Central MM10001AAA
Centaurus Prime

FROM:
Jones A1A Terra

RE: Countersabotage

Sir: This is to report successful deactivation of the source of an Aldebaranian-type remote-handling-machine signal; deactivation was carried out by resonant tracer-wave apparatus. No countertracing operation was detected. It is to be assumed that the Aldebaranian-type signal resulted from a flaw in the shielding of the source. Total burn-out of this source's A and M circuits appears probable from analysis of filtered-signal characteristics during deactivation.

Let me say again that handling two jobs at once is not ideal, particularly if the Aldebaranians are on this planet. I repeat that in my opinion, they are.

I again request assistance to enable me to carry out at least one of my two assignments with maximum efficiency.

Jones

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—BY HYPERWARP—
2074B16

TO:
Jones A1A, Terra
ZZ6074BZA
FROM:
G12, Centauran High Command
Centaurus Prime
RE:
Report and request

Sir: Your report of deactivation of Aldebaranian-type signal-source highly satisfactory.

Your request for assistance refused, due to prior commitments of higher priority.

Keep up the good work.

J. Schnock, Stf. Col.
In-Charge

Branwell, Ohio
R.F.D. #1
July 2, 1964

Mr. R. B. Jones, Ed.
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jones:

I have long read your publications with great interest, but, just between us, I think your latest issues are not up to your usual high level. I think I could do better for you myself.

I am, therefore, enclosing a novelet, titled "Break of Day."

When you send the check, please note I am not your prize author J. A. Catherton, who is no relative of mine. If he were my own brother, I would not talk to him after the way he ended that novel in the December issue. To avoid confusion, I want to use the pen-name, Lance Burnett.

Sincerely,
J. C. Catherton

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra
TO:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:28
MESSAGE: Chief—The Chute has yet to stabilize enough to let your new sabotage gimmick through.

I hope you will also send through a new remote-handling-machine control-unit. This one gave a weird hum and blew up in a shower of sparks the other night, just as I was getting set to have a little fun with the second stage of an Atlas Agena rocket.

I can't sabotage anything without this remote-handling-machine control-unit. Also, please send a new viewfinder, as the eyeplates of this one are fogged and starred.

—There aren't any Centaurans on this planet, are there?

Yours in frustration,
J. March

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—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:32

TO:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra

MESSAGE: March—Indications here are that the Chute will stabilize momentarily, to be followed by a long interval of instability.

Unfortunately, our credit-allocation is about used up for this budgetary period, so you will have to position the disruptor manually. —Yours in adversity,

Q. Sarul

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

Liz—

I'm taking Catherton's story, "Break of Day." Make out a check for $500.00. The address is RFD #1, Branwell, Ohio. Note, please, that this is J. C. Catherton, penname Lance Burnett. *Don't* send the check to J. A. Catherton, as this is not the same man.

R. B. Jones

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office, Terra

TO:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:34

MESSAGE: Chief—The disruptor got through the Chute the day before yesterday, about the same time as your incredible message. Do you have any idea what you're asking me to do when you say, first that I should plant this device in a "research installation governing their long-range space-exploration program," and then, in a later message, you drop the suggestion that I will have to do this *"manually?"*

Fortunately, I found that the instructions for this thought-disruptor itself were clear. I can see that, what with its projecting a wide-angle cone-shaped beam, at random intervals, that interrupts mental activity, and creates confusion, memory lapse, and short-range subjective quasi-temporal jumps, this would be an effective device to sabotage high-level local space-planning. I was glad to see that this was a practical gadget.

But I can tell you I had no intention of trying to plant this device by hand, and thereby wind up shot, in prison, under questioning by the FBI, or giving testimony before a Senate committee. You don't seem to realize what I am up against.

Luckily, just as I was examining the gadget, I had a brain wave.

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There is a big important organization called JPN Cybernetics Research, which has the lion's share of the supersecret design-computer market, and is, I believe, starting to supply these computers to the military and the space program.

Well, suddenly I could see exactly what to do. JPN Research is just moving into new offices, and I immediately went there, landed a job as janitor, and in the bustle and confusion succeeded in planting the disruptor behind a louvered panel in the back of a big RECONVEN-666 SUPERTRON computer.

As you can see, the disruptor is bound to affect the action of the 666, and this, in turn, will throw the JPN program off-base, which, by an inescapable chain of events will then react on the local space program, since JPN Research is integrally bound into this program.

I was in a somewhat exhilirated frame of mind, thanks to this coup, and, thus keyed up, I was unable to avoid grabbing a shapely secretary I met in the hall, and dancing a little jig with her, along with giving her a brotherly local-style "kiss" for good measure. Unfortunately, she turned out to be the wife of some stuffed shirt who immediately fired me. This does not matter, however, since the disruptor is already in the 666, doing its work. I enclose a diagram to show where I planted it.

I think I deserve a medal for this job, don't you?

Incidentally, you didn't answer the questions in my previous message: There aren't any Centaurans on this planet, are there? —Yours in triumph, J. March

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:

Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:35

TO:

J. March, Agent
Branch Office, Terra

MESSAGE: March—One more job like this, and the medal you get will be a size twelve nuclear grenade wrapped around your neck on a length of high-voltage cable.

In the first place, putting the disruptor inside a *computer* is plain stupid. How do you know it will work on an electronic device? This disruptor was designed for human-type organic nervous systems. Maybe it will work on this 666 you mention, but how do you *know?*

In the second place, what if the 666 does act up? What if they then run a test problem through it and get a wrong answer? Then they will examine it and *find the disruptor*, right?

In the third place, what you

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say about your frame of mind when you had this disastrous stroke of genius suggests that you had inadvertently brushed against the switch, turned the device on, and gotten a high-power jolt at short range. This is the only explanation I can think of for your catastrophic series of blunders, which is capped by a classic error evident in the diagram enclosed with your message.

In this diagram, you show a distinct bump on one side of the little rectangle you use to represent the disruptor. Apparently you believe that this side with the bump is the front of the case. No. This is the *back* of the case. The cone of mental disruption is projected at random intervals out the *other* side of the case, which is a plain flat plate of electromagnetically-transparent plastic.

You have, then, got this device in the wrong place, and you have got it in there *backwards*.

Now, reference to your diagram reveals one additional, purely-gratuitious element of disaster.

This device is now aimed through two walls into the adjacent building; that is, according to your diagram, into an office of Stupendous Publications, Inc.

Now, in reply to your question whether the Centauran Technocracy has any agents on this planet, we do not actually *know*. But subject-matter analysis of material put out by Stupendous Publications suggests a strong Centauran bias. Intensive probing operations have failed to prove a thing, but we positively do *not* want to complicate both our space-sabotage program and our investigation of possible Centauran involvement by tangling the two together.

To correct this chain of errors, we are sending you, as soon as the Chute stabilizes, a beam-projector that can be aimed at the appropriate spot in the JPN Cybernetics building, and it will positively burn out every circuit in the disruptor.

Until this time, the cone of confusion will, at random intervals, be projected through the two walls, somewhat attenuated by such a thickness of matter, into an office of Stupendous Publications.

— Well, if they *are* Centaurans, they will deserve what happens. But they may get suspicious.

Keep a close watch for the beam-projector, which we will send as soon as the Chute stabilizes. We want to get rid of that disruptor before anyone finds it.
—Yours in catastrophe, Q. Sarul

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

7/9/64

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R. B. —

I have just sent out a check for $500.00, for "Break of Day," by Lance Burnett, penname J. C. Catherton. I've been careful not to send the check to J. A. Catherton.

Liz

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

7/9/64

Liz —

I'm afraid you've somehow got this backwards. "Lance Burnett" is the penname of J. C. Catherton, not the other way around. — However I'm sure the check will reach him, as he lives in a small town, and probably they know his penname. And if it doesn't, he will let us know. This is much better than sending it to J. A. Catherton and having to extract it from him afterward.

R. B. Jones

U.S. POST OFFICE
BRANWELL, O.

July 10, 1964

Sam Barnet
R.F.D. #2
Branwell, O.
Dear Sam,

I have an envelope here from Stupendous Publications, Inc., addressed to "Lance Burnett," R.F.D. #1, Branwell. Do any of your relatives spell their names "Burnett"? This name doesn't sound like anyone else who lives around here.

T. Stebbs
Postmaster

R.F.D. #2
Branwell, O.
July 11, 1964

T. Stebbs
Postmaster
Branwell, O.
Dear Ted,

No relative of mine.—Imagine the letter has the wrong address, and should be sent to Branvill, not Branwell.

Sam Barnet

U.S. POST OFFICE
Branvill, O.

July 18, 1964

Miss Lucy Barnett
R.F.D. #1
Branvill, O.
Lucy —

We have an envelope here from Stupendous Publications, Inc., addressed to "Mr. Lance Burnett." Is this anyone visiting you, or could it be a misspelling of your name?

Edna R.

R.F.D. #1
Branvill, O.
July 21, 1964

Mrs. Edna Ramsey
Postmistress
Branvill, O.
Dear Edna:

No, Tom and Alice are going

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to visit us later, over Labor Day; but there's no "Lance" in the family, and I have never had any business with the company you mention.

Possibly this was intended for Larry Barton. —Or the letter *could* have been meant to go to Oregon.

Lucy Barnett

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra
TO:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,489 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:722:98
MESSAGE: Chief—I am still watching the Chute for that beam-projector, but the Chute is still unstable.

The thought-disruptor is still in the 666, unless they've found it. —Yours in gloom, J. March

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
10/29/64

Liz—

Every so often lately, all hell breaks loose around here. Exactly how did it come about that this cover illustration by Beams, with the big "B" down in the corner, plain as day, is credited to Hoxmeyer on the contents page?

We now have about a hundred

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thousand copies of this issue moving out all over the country, and what do you suppose is going to happen when Beame gets a look at that contents page?

R. B. Jones

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
10/29/64

R. B. —

I don't know *how* that Hoxmeyer thing in the current issue came about, but right now I am going through a stack of letters in response to your answer to the letter from Mr. Larry J. Prendergast in the previous issue.

As you remember, you said, "Light travels at up to twelve times the speed of sound (in space), so that Fizeau's experiment did not prove the relativity of c in interplanetary travel."

I am trying to arrange these letters for your convenience in considering them.

— Liz

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
10/30/64

Liz —

Obviously, my reply to Prendergast must have been a joke.

On page 65 of this current issue containing the Hoxmeyer error, however, I find that kind of thing popping up too often.

Whose bright idea was it to run three streams of type down through this illustration, in the background, so that text and illustration are mutually fouled up?

R. B.

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra
TO:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:723:14
MESSAGE: Chief—That beam-projector has yet to come through the Chute, and the Chute is just as unstable now as earlier.

I have tried to get at the disruptor by less drastic methods, but that part of the JPN building is sewed up tight. —Yours in weary patience. J. March

—BY HYPERWARP—
2074F6

TO:
G12, Centauran High Command
04618 Central MM100001AAA
Centaurus Prime
FROM:
Jones A1A Terra
RE:
Suspected Aldebaranaian harassment

Sir: I enclose a full report covering what I believe to be mental

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harassment aimed at disrupting the efficiency of this operation.

I have warned you repeatedly that it is too much to expect two such jobs of one individual.

Now I request that you study the enclosed report, and then send me at once one Model C rapid-keying beam-thrower with attached direction-finder so that I can end this business.

Jones

—BY HYPERWARP—
2074F8

TO:
Jones A1A Terra
ZZ6074BZA
FROM:
G12, Centauran High Command
Centaurus Prime
RE:
Report and request

Sir: I fully appreciate your irritation at this low blow by the Aldebaranians, who have, however, thus revealed their presence definitely. We are preparing measures to localize them precisely.

We must now avoid revealing our own hand. You must, therefore, bear up under this frustrating experience.

J. Schnock, Stf. Col.
In-Charge

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo

11/27/64

R. B. —

Yes, I *know* we had things straightened out for a while there, and I honestly don't know how we came to buy "Weeping I Through the Ship Chandlery."

As I remember, you, I, and the business manager were standing in a corner of the room with one of us laughing and reading it out loud, and all of a sudden we just realized it was great.

I believe you are right that this was written by splitting a page of Dickens' "Old Curiosity Shop" down the middle, and joining the left half of this page line-by-line with the right half of a page from Bowditch's "Practical Navigator."

I am very embarrased not to have noticed this before.

I certainly agree that it should be suppressed.

Liz

R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio
December 10, 1964

Mr. R. B. Jones, Ed.
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jones:

On July 1st of this year, I sent you a novelet titled "Break of Day," under the penname, "Lance Burnett."

I have yet to receive any word about this novelet.

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I realize that long delays are customary in the writing business, and I am prepared to be patient. But you have now had this story for six months.

I hope you will either accept, or send it back to me so that I can send it somewhere else.

I understand editors complain that there are not enough good magazine writers around nowadays.

Obviously, they have all died of starvation.

Truly yours,
J. C. Catherton

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
12/11/64

Liz —

Make out a check for $500.00 to J. C. Catherton, and send it to him at RFD #1, Branwell, Ohio. Take care of this at once, and see that it goes out as quickly as possible.

R. B. Jones

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.
Dec. 11, 1964

Mr. J. C. Catherton
R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio
Dear Mr. Catherton:

I want to express my sincere regret for the minor clerical error that has prevented our check for $500.00 from reaching you in payment for your novelet, "Break of Day."

This check was mistakenly sent to "Lance Burnett," your penname, and apparently was lost in the mail.

I want to thank you for your very fine work on "Break of Day." Another check is being sent you at once.

Cordially,
R. B. Jones
Editorial Director

R.F.D. #1,
Branwell, O.
Dec. 11, 1964

Mr. R. B. Jones, Ed.
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York, N. Y.
Dear Mr. Jones:

Please accept my apology for my hasty letter of Dec. 10th.

Shortly after sending it, it occurred to me that you could possibly have written to me under my penname. I inquired at the post office, and sure enough, there was an envelope addressed to "Lance Burnett."

Thank you very much for the check.

I am currently working on a new novelet and I intend to send it off to you around the end of this month.

Sincerely,
J. C. Catherton

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STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
12/12/64

Liz —

Don't send that check to J. C. Catherton. Let me know at once that you haven't sent it.

Jones

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
12/12/64

R. B.—

The check went out last night, as you told me. I mailed it from the central post office, Air Mail, Special Delivery.

Liz

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.
Dec. 12, 1964

Mr. J. C. Catherton
R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio

Dear Mr. Catherton:

I have your letter of Dec. 11th.

As we have just sent your second check, to replace the check which you have now received, I think I should warn you that we have been in touch with our bank, and payment on this second check has been stopped. So that there will be no misunderstanding—the first check will go through, but the second check will not.

Do not deposit this (second) check. Do not cash it. Do not try to use it in any form. This check is no longer valid.

Return this second check to me at once.

Sincerely,
R. B. Jones
Editorial Director

—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4(2) QZ66:723:47

TO:
J. March
Branch Office Terra

MESSAGE: Dear March — Please be patient. We are trying to get the beam-thrower to you, but severe instability continues to block our efforts. No, use of explosives is not justified in this case, as it would not destroy the disruptor circuits with the certainty we require.

Q. Sarul
Chief, Unit 28

R.F.D. #1
Branwell, O.
Dec. 14th, 1964

Mr. R. B. Jones, Ed.
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jones:

I have just received your replacement check for "Break of

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Day," and your letter explaining the mix-up over the checks.

Thank you very much for this second check. I hope you will excuse my depositing this additional check at once—for the purpose of knocking the look of superiority off the face of the frustrated social arbiter who serves as teller at the bank here. I am enclosing herewith my own check for five hundred dollars, so you see it comes out right in the end.

Thanks very much for your kind words about "Break of Day." I am working hard on the new novelet, and hope you will like it just as well.

Cordially,
J. C. Catherton

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.
Dec. 16, 1964

Mr. J. C. Catherton:

I am dumbfounded by your letter of Dec. 14th, which has just reached me.

Thank you for your check.

I have, of course, gotten in touch with our bank, and instructed them to pay our check when it is presented.

Please disregard my previous letter. It is always easier to give authors money than it is to get it out of them again, as you would know if you gave advances, as we do in our book division.

However, I am sure we will have a most harmonious business association.

We are looking forward to your new novelet, and will give it a very careful reading, as we do all material of real merit submitted to us.

Cordially,
R. B. Jones
Editorial Director

R.F.D. #1
Branwell, O.
Dec. 16, 1964

Mr. R. B. Jones
Editorial Director
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am astonished at your letter of Dec. 12th.

If you want men to write for you, not frightened mice, you should treat your writers like men. You will never get decent stories from the kind of people who will accept the treatment laid down in your letter of Dec. 12th.

Why should you stop payment on the second check?

I have sent my *own* check. That you stop payment on your second check means that I have received *no* payment for this story, as my check now cancels out your first check. This is the height of callous disregard for the rights of others.

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Do you propose that I write for you for nothing?

Perhaps you would like me to send you a check for $500.00 along with my next story.

I can assure you that until this matter is straightend out, and until you stop using a manner of speaking which suggests that I am operating some kind of racket by expecting payment for my work, you will see no more of my work.

I am stopping payment on my check forthwith.

Truly yours,
J. C. Catherton

—BY HYPERWARP—
2074J5

TO:
G12, Centauran High Command
04618 Central MM10001AAA
Centaurus Prime
FROM:
Jones A1A, Terra
RE:
Continued harassment

Sir: I enclose a new report on continued Aldebaranian activity.

You had better hurry up those countermeasures or I am going after this bird with a trace meter and photoplasmic homogenizer.

Jones

—BY HYPERWARP—
2074J6

TO:
Jones A1A Terra
ZZ6074BZA
FROM:
G12, Centauran High Command
Centaurus Prime
RE:
Harassment

Sir: Don't do it. We now have their installation bugged with a thousand percent overlap in all directions, and are taking out valuable information by the bucket.

They are just as anxious to close out this operation as you are.

If this gets to be too much, take a Z-capsule and hold your breath for a moment. This will give the temporary outward effect of apoplexy, which is exactly what the Aldebaranians would expect of a Terran in this spot.

J. Schnock, Stf. Col.
In-Charge

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.
Dec. 19, 1964

Mr. J. C. Catherton
R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio

Dear Mr. Catherton:

I am writing to you in place of our editorial director, Mr. R. B. Jones, who was taken to the hospital yesterday with a mild heart attack.

I have gone over your corre-

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spondence with Mr. Jones, and agree that some injustice has been done here. Mr. Jones, as you know, is one of the old "tough" breed of editors, and is inclined to be a little harsh, even—perhaps especially—with his favorite authors. He expects a very high standard of performance.

Now, as for this difficulty about the checks. I have here your letters, dated December 10th, and 13th, and copies of Mr. Jones' letters which seem to make clear that your story "Break of Day," due for publication in January, has in effect not yet been paid for.

I am enclosing herewith our check for $500.00 to make good this error.

Sincerely,
Richard R. Manning
Publisher

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
Interoffice Memo
Dec. 21, 1964

Richard—

I have word from the bank that payment has been stopped on this check from J. C. Catherton. If I understand these vouchers correctly, Catherton has now been paid $1500.00 for this one novelet, "Break of Day." This is already 50% over our top rate. But what worries me is that there seems to be no end in sight. Every few days, another check goes out to Catherton. We'd better draw the line somewhere.—Let me know if you want me to take a crack at straightening this out.

Harold Halliburton
Business Manager

STUPENDOUS
PUBLICATIONS
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.
Dec. 21, 1964

Mr. J. C. Catherton
R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio

Dear Mr. Catherton:

Our bank informs us that you have deposited check No. 6428 to your account, and that this check has been duly paid. We have accordingly stopped payment on checks No. 6998 and 7002.

As you have stopped payment on your check No. 289, I sincerely trust that this solves the problem of paying for your story "Break of Day."

Very truly yours,
Harold J. Halliburton

R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio
Dec. 21, 1964

Mr. Richard R. Manning
Publisher
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Manning:

I have received your letter of

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December 18th, and am very grateful for your kindness.

I was very sorry to hear of Mr. Jones' illness, and certainly hope that this mix-up over the checks was in no way responsible.

It appears to me that the matter is still not entirely straightened out. Apparently, you did not see my letter of Dec. 16th, in which I said that I was stopping payment on my check, owing to a slight misunderstanding with Mr. Jones, who I thought was stopping payment on his checks.

If I understand this correctly, I will now have one thousand five hundred dollars for this story, and this is three times your standard rate. All I should get is five hundred dollars.

Accordingly, I am sending you a check for one thousand dollars.

This is the difference between $1500.00 and $500.00, and should straighten the matter out entirely.

Cordially,
J. C. Catherton

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
12/23/64

Harold—

I have just received a $1000 check from J. C. Catherton, to make up the difference between the $1500 I was giving him, and the $500 that was his payment for "Break of Day."

It appears to me that your stopping payment on the two latest checks means that he will suffer severely for selling us the novelet. If I understand this correctly, we are now $500.00 ahead. In effect, *he* has paid *us* $500 for the story.

Richard

STUPENDOUS PUBLICATIONS
12/23/64

Richard—

I have a terrific cold, and am not sure I am thinking any too clearly, but this matter is certainly so elementary that it can be straightened out.

Now, as I understand it, we owe Catherton five hundred dollars, over and above the five hundred for the story.

Accordingly, I am sending him air mail two checks for five hundred dollars. The first nullifies the debt and the second pays him for the story.—Now we have that out of the way.

Next to counteract the $1,000 check Catherton sent you, I have instructed our bank to pay the two $500 checks you and Jones sent Catherton. Thus these two checks cancel out the $1,000 check from Catherton.

Now, on top of this cold, I have a blinding headache, so I am going home, have a hot toddy, and start the Christmas season early.

I would advise you to do the same.

Harold

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—SUBGRAM—

FROM:
J. March, Agent
Branch Office Terra
TO:
Q. Sarul, Chief, Unit 28
Bureau of Outplanet Sabotage
Block 262,498 Level 18
Aldebaran 4 (2) QZ66:723:51

MESSAGE: Chief—On returning from successful performance of my mission, I got drawn into a local celebration, but assuming I can focus long enough, I want to report that I finally got the beam-thrower through the Chute, and am happy to say that I put it into action—successfully, since the red tell-tale light lit up bright when I fired at the disruptor.

The natives on this planet have a saying that "Every cloud has its silver lining."

If so, I would like to know where it is in this mess.

—Yours in hung-over relief,
J. March

R.F.D. #1
Branwell, Ohio
January 1, 1965

Mr. Richard R. Manning
Publisher
Stupendous Publications
4622 East 42nd St.
New York 58, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Manning:

I am belatedly writing to you today because for the past week I have been waiting to be sure that I am caught up on all the letters coming in from your wonderful Stupendous Publications.

As you may imagine, I was absolutely dumfounded to receive two more checks for $500.00. Especially so, since upon receiving Mr. Halliburton's very cold letter of December 21st, I had immediately stopped payment on my check for $1,000.00.

You may imagine my further astonishment when the two previous checks which Mr. Halliburton said he had stopped payment on, were also paid.

This means that I have now received five checks for five hundred dollars, two sent by Mr. Jones, one from you, and two from Mr. Halliburton. This is a total of two thousand five hundred dollars for this one story.

I have thought of sending back to you a check for two thousand dollars, but I am afraid of what might happen. This way we know where we stand.

I am enclosing a new story, and I am happy to tell you that you can have it free, as you now have a credit on account with me of two thousand dollars.

Don't worry that I am going to give up writing. I see there is real money in it, and I will be working at it day and night.

But I don't expect to have another Christmas like that one for a while. Happy New Year!

Cordially,
J. C. Catherton

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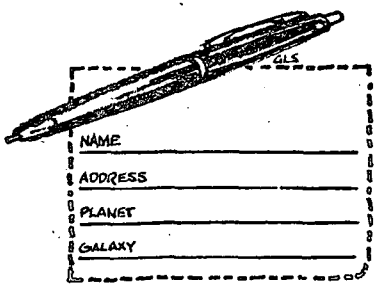

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(*continued from page 97*)

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POOTIE

(Awed) Uncle Joe, is It really dead?

JOE

(Ponderingly) It should, indeed, be dead, Pootie—poisoned and sunk no one knows how deep under the muskeg. But can we tell?

BACKGROUND MUSIC RISES OVER HIS VOICE.

Once before It was thought to be dead, even mummified. But we do not yet know the full powers of Aspirin-X. It survived for thousands of years before to walk the Earth again. Perhaps, who knows, down under all that muskeg, a spark of life still lingers. . . .

THE RISING OF THE BACKGROUND MUSIC DROWNS OUT HIS VOICE. WE SEE ONLY THE LITTLE SQUARE OF MUSKEG IN THE SCREEN. AS WE WATCH, A BUBBLE OOZES TO THE SURFACE, SWELLS UP, AND POPS.

THE MUSKEG IS STILL AGAIN.

THE SCENE DARKENS. THE FINAL MUSIC FILLS OUR EARS. SLOWLY, RISING UP OUT OF THE NOW DARKENED SWAMP COME THE SHINING WORDS—

THE END

FOLLOWED SLOWLY BY ONE MORE WORD IN A RUNNING SCRIPT. . . .

—*Maybe.* . . .

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